



The Nation's Report Card and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness

Regional Symposium

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Jackson, Mississippi

NAEP—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—is also known as The Nation's Report Card. Congressionally authorized and funded since 1969, NAEP reports to the public on the status and progress of student achievement in core subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12.

The National Assessment Governing Board that oversees NAEP is conducting a comprehensive program of research to transform it into an indicator of 12th grade academic preparedness for college and job training.

The Governing Board established the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission to raise public awareness and receive feedback on the Governing Board's planned research program on 12th grade preparedness, the research results, and the potential of NAEP 12th grade data as an indicator of academic preparedness for postsecondary education and training.

As a part of this work, the Commission is conducting a series of symposia around the nation with leaders in K-12 and higher education, business, civil rights, and legislative policy. This is a record of the symposium conducted on April 10, 2012 in Jackson, Mississippi.

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PRESIDING

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Chair, NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission
Former Governor of Mississippi

PRESENTATION

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Cornelia Orr

Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board

PANEL

Tom Burnham

Mississippi State Superintendent of Education

Eric Clark

Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board

Charles McClelland

Chair, Mississippi Board of Education

Robin Robinson

Past President, Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning

Blake Wilson

President, Mississippi Economic Council

Honorable Hob Bryan

Mississippi State Senate

Honorable Kelvin Buck

Mississippi House of Representatives

Honorable Gray Tollison

Mississippi State Senate

Mark Musick, Panel Moderator

Advisor, NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission
James H. Quillen Chair of Excellence in Education and Teaching,
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Governor Musgrove:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Governor Musgrove:

Good morning. It's good to have you here. I want to welcome you this morning to the symposium on the Nation's Report Card and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness. We are hosting this symposium today, and we appreciate your being here and being involved in it.

NAEP is the acronym for Nation's Report Card, and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness will be our focus today. We're pleased to see you here this morning. You are leaders from across the state, in education, policymaking, the business community, and in the civil rights community in Mississippi—all who understand the critical importance to the state, to our region, and to our nation that producing 12th graders who are academically prepared for the next step, either college or the workforce, is beneficial to us as a state, region, and nation. And you understand the necessity of having a trusted source to tell us whether we're succeeding.

Are we producing people in our high schools that are well prepared, that are able to advance our nation in a global economy? Will our 12th graders be ready for on-the-job training, for college and university, and to participate effectively in civil life? Does our education system produce human capital that will promote Mississippi's economic vitality? Important questions that we will explore today.

Why a symposium in Mississippi? This symposium in Mississippi is the fourth of seven scheduled for us this year. You may ask, "Why Mississippi?" The Commission chose Mississippi because of the exceptional leadership of our panelists in education, and the leadership of all of you in the audience. We also chose Mississippi because of its long history of working with and participating in the NAEP, actually since 1992.

Mississippi was one of the first states in the nation to sign up for NAEP. Mississippi wanted to compare its student achievement to other states across the country. This, for Mississippi, would be beneficial, but it's also beneficial for all of us in the nation. And, of course, Mississippi is my home state, so I also wanted to have it in Mississippi as well, one of the prerogatives you get when you chair a commission. So all of those things put together tell you why we wanted to have the symposium here in Mississippi.

Some of you know my background. You know my interest in education. For others of you, you may not. But I wanted to point out two things today. Because of my involvement in education, President Clinton appointed me through the Secretary of Education to serve on NAEP when I was in the office of governor.

At the time, the chair, or one of the members of the board, was Darv Winick. And Darv is from Texas, and Darv is with us today. Darv, would you stand up? Please recognize Darv here.

[Applause]

I could say something like Darv is old as dirt. I could say many things. But the truth of the matter is Darv was around when we first started talking about accountability, when we started talking about NAEP, and when we started talking about the Nation's Report Card. So I wanted to recognize him being here with us today.

The first thing I wanted to say is the importance of education for all of us. For me, it's an extremely personal story. My mother and my father did not graduate from high school, and I'm the first person in my family to have graduated from college. I recognize the opportunities that I hold today are in large measure because of the opportunities I had in college—first, a junior college. I know, Dr. Clark: they're basically all community colleges today. But back then, they were all junior colleges. But that gave me a level of postsecondary opportunity. And then to have gone on to Ole Miss and graduate from law school gave me an opportunity to contribute as a productive member of society. And that's what we want for all of our people.

But secondly, it is very important for our economy that more and more of our young people be educated, that they be trained, that they're able to productively contribute to society. I will venture the prediction that a lot of jobs that we see moving to China, Asia, and other places within the next 10 to 15 years will start coming back to America. The same thing happened with Japan and others. Are we going to be ready for that increase in workforce?

I heard President Clinton speak about a year ago when, at the time, the unemployment rate was about 9.6 percent. He said there were five million jobs that needed to be filled, and the unemployment rate would go to 6.8 percent if we had the right people with the right set of skills to fit the jobs. And today, we don't have the right set of skills and the training and the preparedness of our young people.

And strangely enough, we do not have a common understanding of what academic 12th grade preparedness means. NAEP is doing research to come forth with a better understanding for K-12 educators, for university and community college educators, and for the business community, of what it means to be academically prepared. I think that's important. And so we appreciate your being here and participating in the symposium, because in Mississippi, I believe it's awfully important for us to make sure that our young people are academically prepared.

So this is our topic today: the importance of 12th Grade Academic Preparedness for Mississippi and the nation, and the potential for the National Assessment of Educational

Progress as a 12th grade preparedness indicator. NAEP has been around since 1969, and is the only continuing benchmark of achievement throughout the country. It is the benchmark that all states use to compare how they are doing.

There will be three parts of the program today. First, there will be a presentation on NAEP and the 12th grade preparedness research by the Commission vice chair, Greg Jones, and the Governing Board executive director, Cornelia Orr.

Second, we will have a panel discussion on the implications of NAEP for Mississippi. The panel is made up of Mississippi education leaders: Dr. Tom Burnham, our state superintendent of education; Dr. Eric Clark, the executive director of the Mississippi Community College Board; Charles McClelland, the chair of the Mississippi Board of Education; Robin Robinson, immediate past president of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning; and Blake Wilson, president of the Mississippi Economic Council. The panel will be moderated by Mark Musick, an advisor to the Commission.

The third part of our symposium today will consist of a panel of legislators to discuss the effect of proposed legislation pending in the Mississippi legislature on 12th grade preparedness. That panel will be made up of State Senator Hob Bryan, State Senator Kelvin Buck, and State Senator Gray Tollison, chair of the education committee in the Senate.

At the end, there will be time for questions and answers on both panels. Notes will be taken and you'll see them projected on the screen, and we'll have a transcript of all of the proceedings today to make sure that we have all of the information covered.

Now the first presentation; we'll go ahead and get started this morning. I'd like to introduce Greg Jones and Cornelia Orr, who will provide an overview of NAEP and 12th grade preparedness. Greg will speak first, with an overview of the Commission—who we are and what NAEP is. Cornelia will then talk about the research and the results to date on the NAEP preparedness initiative.

Let me tell you a little bit about these two individuals to let you know where they come from and what their interest is and why they're here today.

Greg Jones is the president and CEO—he's retired—of State Farm General Insurance. He is chairman of California Business for Education Excellence, and former chairman of the California Business Roundtable. Greg currently serves on the board of directors for Franklin University, the Los Angeles Urban League, the National Urban League, the NCAA Leadership Advisory Board, and the Tiger Woods Foundation. He is a former member of the California State Board of Education, and is listed in *Who's Who of Executives and Professionals*.

Cornelia Orr is with us today, and Cornelia is the executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board. She comes from Florida, with an extensive background in

education measurement in Florida schools and the Florida Department of Education, and she's the person who knows just about everything about testing. Greg and Cornelia this morning will give us the background on NAEP, the 12th Grade Preparedness Initiative, and will help you understand exactly why this is important. Greg.

Greg Jones:

Thank you very much, Governor, and thanks to all of you as well for being here. It's great to be in your great state. I've not been in Mississippi in almost 30 years. It's great to be back, and certainly great to be here with you. And I think you'll enjoy the day.

As the governor said, I want to give you a little bit of background about who we are, what we're all about, what we're trying to accomplish. And I think you'll find today very valuable, very rewarding. So we, again, appreciate your being here.

Now if you're not familiar with the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission, some of these slides I think will be a little bit helpful. The three logos right here on this slide will help explain who we are. The top logo is the National Assessment Governing Board. The Governing Board is a non-partisan group of state and local policymakers, teachers, principals, state and local school board members, business representatives, test specialists, and the general public. The Board is appointed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, but by law, is independent of the Secretary and the U.S. Department of Education. The Board sets policy for NAEP, the National Assessment of Education Progress, also known—as you're probably familiar with—The Nation's Report Card.

The bottom logo is the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission. The Governing Board established the Commission, led by Governor Musgrove, to raise awareness about 12th grade academic preparedness for college and job training, and what NAEP is doing to serve as a national indicator of preparedness. Both the NAEP and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness are the focus of our symposium today, as the governor mentioned a little bit earlier. And as he also mentioned, this is now the fourth of our planned symposia. We started out in California in Sacramento. We were in Boston, in Nashville, and, of course, now here, and we hope to culminate all of these events with our final symposium in Washington, D.C.

As we've mentioned, again, NAEP stands for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as The Nation's Report Card. NAEP is America's only continuing, nationally representative measure of student academic achievement, and it has been congressionally authorized and funded since 1969. NAEP reports to the public on student achievement at grades 4, 8, and 12, in core subjects of reading, writing, math, science, U.S. history, geography, civics, foreign language, economics, and the arts. And we're excited that in 2014, NAEP will assess technology and engineering literacy for the very first time, adding to what we know about achievement in the STEM areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

In addition to providing national results, NAEP is the only source of comparable state data on student achievement at grade levels 4 and 8. As many of you know, all states that receive funds under Title I participate in state NAEP in reading and math at grades 4 and 8. NAEP also reports results for 21 urban districts, although there are no urban districts in Mississippi that participate at this time.

Now the next slide that we have is an important one. This graph shows the results for Mississippi in mathematics at grade 4. Now these are Mississippi scores from 1992 until 2011. The graph compares Mississippi scores to the nation and to the highest and lowest scoring jurisdictions in 2011. Comparisons with all the other states are also available, but I wanted you to take a look at this.

The gold line that you see is Mississippi. The blue line right above that is the nation. The light blue line below is Washington, D.C., the lowest performing jurisdiction. And the dark blue line at the top is Massachusetts, the highest performing jurisdiction. This chart shows that Mississippi average test scores at grade 4 have steadily increased since 1992, and the score gap with the nation has gotten smaller: from 17 points below the nation in 1992, to 10 points below in 2003.

Now the next slide, this NAEP data, is also important for analyzing the achievement gaps in race and ethnicity over time, something that we're spending a lot of our time focusing on as well. Again, the gold line represents average fourth grade scores over time for African-American students, the blue line for white students, and the single triangle up at the top is 2011 for Hispanic students. Now this chart shows that for both African-American and white students, achievement has improved since 1992. There are particularly large gains from 2000 to 2005, as you can see, followed by minimal or flat results through 2011.

The gap between Mississippi's white and African-American fourth graders in math was 30 points in 1992, and 24 points in 2011: signs that the gap is closing, but as we all know, they still persist and they're still too large. The gap between white and Hispanic students in 2011—that's the only year that the data were available—was 12 points.

NAEP also reports results by gender, as well as for students with disabilities, English language learners—which we have a lot of in California—and by economic status. So NAEP provides similar charts for all of those groups as well.

NAEP provides some very unique benefits to the state—something that is not provided anywhere else, and where we really believe that NAEP makes a significant difference. Comparisons with other states over time are particularly important. Being able to track progress over time is a key part of what NAEP's vision is all about. And as you can see in the charts, Mississippi has participated in state NAEP since the 1990s. With NAEP, Mississippi can see its progress over almost two decades, and compare that with the nation and other states.

NAEP serves really as a common benchmark for looking at the rigor of state standards. Because other than with NAEP, there really is no way to tell whether “proficient” on a test in one state is more or less rigorous than “proficient” on a test in any other state. State assessments are so different in form and content, as you educators I’m sure realize, that they really can’t be combined to show national results, and cannot be compared across states.

So NAEP provides a common benchmark, and, importantly, there is no cost for this rich and important data that NAEP provides. All the costs are borne by the federal government. Plus, burden on schools and students is very minimal. Student test-taking time is about 60 minutes. The tests are secured and administered by NAEP staff. There are no individual student or school results, only results for groups; thus, there is no incentive for taking time away from instruction for test preparation.

Now also important, and this next slide illustrates, NAEP is also unique because it can be linked to international tests in reading, in math, and in science. NAEP 2011 results are being linked with TIMSS, which is the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, at grade 8, and with PIRLS, Programme in International Literacy Study at grade 4. And that’s very significant, because what it means is that a state’s NAEP score will produce an equivalent score for the international test. So Mississippi’s 2011 NAEP results in eighth grade math and science and fourth grade in reading, can enable it to see how Mississippi students compare with students not just in this country, but in other nations such as China, Japan, England, and Canada.

NAEP is also unique because it’s the only source of student academic achievement data at the 12th grade. And, again, as you educators know, state high school assessments are typically administered before the 12th grade for most of our students. Just like other state assessments, they can’t be combined to produce national results, and can’t be compared on a state-by-state basis. College admission tests like the ACT and SAT, that we’re all familiar with, are generally taken before the 12th grade, and they’re taken by a self-selected sample of students that are college-bound. Common Core assessments—which many of you have heard about are now under development for implementation in 2014 or ’15—at the high school level are anticipated to be taken by the 11th grade.

In 2009, NAEP also became a source of 12th grade state-level achievement results, not just national data. Eleven states volunteered to participate in a pilot program to set baselines for tracking progress in reading and math achievement at the end of high school. In 2013, the 12th grade state pilot will be administered once again.

So, let’s talk a little bit about 12th grade preparedness and what role NAEP plays. In 2004, a National Blue Ribbon Panel recognized NAEP’s potential as really the only source of 12th grade student academic achievement data. The panel included producers; representatives from K-12 systems that produce 12th graders; and consumers, if you will, people from higher education, business, the military, who consume the 12th graders, if

we want to use that term.

In your packets, by the way, there's a slim blue report that contains the recommendations of that panel. And I want to talk about some of that just for a minute. The panel recommended several things. It recommended that NAEP be transformed to report on the academic preparedness of 12th graders for college, job training, and the military. The panel's rationale was this, number one, that as we all know, grade 12 is the transition point to adult pursuits, particularly post-secondary education and job training. Second, for national security and economic viability, it's important for the U.S. to have an indicator of 12th grade student preparedness for college and job training.

Number three, NAEP has earned a reputation for its quality and its integrity, and has great credibility with educators and policymakers. And, finally, as the only source of nationally representative data on 12th grade student achievement, NAEP is uniquely positioned to serve as an indicator of academic preparedness. Finally, the panel identified a very real problem: that too many of our students are graduating from high school with diplomas that are meaningless. And the panel thought that NAEP could also serve as a truth-teller, if you will.

The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that 42 percent of public community college students; 28 percent of all university students; and 20 percent of public four-year students need remedial courses in reading, writing, and/or math. According to the Mississippi Board of Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi Community College Board, the remedial rate in two-year and four-year institutions is 43 percent and 21 percent respectively, about the same as reported for the national level.

As you can well imagine, the cost to students and parents is great, both in money spent on non-credit remedial courses, and additional time required to finish their degrees. Especially troubling is the fact that college students who need remediation are the most likely to drop out, and that minority students are generally over-represented among those needing remediation.

The cost of college-level remediation to states, to the nation, is enormous. Some estimates put it in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually to teach students in college what they should have learned in high school. Indirect costs can be even more staggering, including dollars lost in diminished annual earnings, reduced state and local tax receipts and other costs as well. It's a terrible, terrible waste of human potential, and also wasteful spending, particularly in a time of very tight state budgets. I'm assuming Mississippi is like California in that regard—the tightening of state budgets for K-12 through higher education.

But clearly it is important to increase high school graduation rates. That's something that all of us have worked a lot on as well. But there's a growing recognition across the country that increasing the percentage of high school graduates is an empty goal and a

disservice to our students if it's not accompanied by a goal of ensuring that graduates are academically well prepared.

The National Academy of Sciences said it well in a report, and some of you may have seen this. They issued a report entitled, "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," and their quote, you can see in this slide, says, "Because other nations have the competitive advantage of a lower wage structure, the United States must compete by optimizing its knowledge-based resources, particularly in science and technology." And for those of you businesspeople out there like myself, that's particularly important. It's certainly particularly important to me because, to be globally competitive, we need to educate our 12th graders to be academically prepared for rigorous college work, and ready for job training.

Back in California, there's an organization called the Public Policy Institute. And they did a recent study that pointed out what I think most of us intuitively knew, anyway: that California's economy, because of the heavy influence of high technology, is increasingly dependent on a more highly educated workforce. Now in California, with its highly diverse population, minorities—particularly Latinos and African-Americans—will become the primary new entrants to the workforce. So if you look at the demographics in our state, the demographics continue to trend upward, and those demographics will be reflected in the future workforce that we have.

These are the very same populations that are most underrepresented in college and in rigorous job training programs, and today the most likely to be in remedial programs in college that I discussed earlier.

As the governor said, I was chairman of the California Business Roundtable for several years, and I can tell you that when I was chairman, many of my CEO colleagues often reported to me that there are thousands of jobs going unfulfilled because we're unable to find applicants with the skills to fill them. I'm sure that's not just unique to California. Governor Musgrove addressed the importance of academic preparedness for state economic development, and we'll hear more about that from our panels today.

It's important to note that this lack of a well-prepared workforce is not just a problem for business, but for all of our states and our states' economies, because every job that goes unfulfilled means that there are goods and services that we can't deliver to the domestic or global marketplace, and, therefore, dollars that we can't return to our state and national economy.

As we saw from the earlier slide with NAEP fourth grade data, achievement gaps appear very early on. Clearly, the imperative to close these gaps is not only to benefit the individual students, which, obviously, it does. But ultimately, closing achievement gaps is an important economic imperative central to the wellbeing of our states, our nation, and our citizens. The nation's demography and, thus, the labor supply, is becoming increasingly diverse, just like I mentioned it is in California. In 1992, 73 percent of the

nation's fourth grade children were white. Today, that percentage is 54 percent.

Now you've already seen the much-too-large and persistent achievement gaps between white students and students of color. The point here is that—and I know you're all aware of this—is the importance to the nation's economic future of working to close the achievement gaps and at the same time, strive for higher levels of overall academic preparedness.

Now while K-12 education is important, as all of us in this room know, it's no longer sufficient. Today, education or training beyond high school, is essential for the well-being of the nation, and of the individual. As a policy matter, it's important to know whether our 12th graders have the knowledge and the skills to meet the challenges of today's college-level academics, and tomorrow's high-skilled careers.

The question is, how are we going to know if our young people are academically prepared? So let's examine briefly what we know and what we don't know. We have a lot of important measures that provide an indication of our current well-being and our future prospects. For example, we know the changes on the stock market. You can see that every day. We know the number of bushels of wheat produced and the price of gold. But today, we cannot answer this very critical question. How well-prepared academically are our 12th graders for college and training for good jobs? We need a credible, trustworthy indicator to tell us. But sadly, none currently exist.

To answer those questions and how we're going to know, a program of research is being conducted to transform NAEP at the 12th grade in reading and mathematics into indicators of academic preparedness for post-secondary education and job training. And with that, I'm going to turn this over to my colleague, Cornelia Orr, who will now tell you about the 12th Grade Preparedness Research. Cornelia.

Cornelia Orr:

Thank you, Greg. I also wanted to thank Governor Musgrove for that very warm welcome.

So thank you, Greg, so much for providing the orientation. And I just wanted to begin by saying it's not my job here to conduct a graduate research seminar on the research that we've been doing. But I hope that after I share information with you, that you can walk away understanding that the Board has taken a very rigorous approach to this, and a very comprehensive approach to it. We won't have all of the answers today. It is research that's underway, but we are beginning to see some very positive signs.

So we've been about this initiative for about a decade. And you can see, Greg mentioned the light blue report in your handouts, and we have started this process back in 2002. Their report didn't come actually until 2004, but we've been very methodological in the interim steps that we've taken. We contracted with Achieve. Some of you may know this

organization. They've worked on the American Diploma Project for quite some time, and they helped us revise our 12th grade assessments in reading and mathematics to be more aligned to college entrance. So there was an effort there to do that.

We also had a technical panel. You actually have in your handouts a copy of the technical panel's recommendations. They recommended the research agenda that we're about. They saw as the primary issue, how valid will NAEP be as an indicator? Can we determine how valid this is? They made their report, and then we began our program of research in 2009 based on the 2009 assessments that we conducted at that particular time.

Actually, in the report, you'll find a working definition that we've been using, and it's critical. I'm going to talk a little bit about the ACT and the SAT as college admissions indicators and what their readiness definition is in a minute. But first I wanted you to see that we're looking at entry into college credit or job training programs without the need for remediation. So, an important piece of information there.

Now some people have asked, "Why have you so tightly defined it?" Because as you heard in Greg's presentation, remediation is costly to the universities and to students, so we'd really like to get out of that game. This definition really distinguishes the work that we're doing, and I just want to mention that you hear a lot of rhetoric these days about college and career readiness being the same thing. We haven't really assumed that in our research. You can see they're divided in terms of the definition, and so we've been investigating them accordingly. We're looking, though, at job training programs that would require months of training, not a week certification process or anything like that, but a more formal job training program.

Now if the job training program requires an AA degree, or a BS degree, that's likely to involve college entrance requirements, so we've tried to distinguish between those. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

We have five different areas that we have been studying. First of all, we compared the content of the NAEP assessments in reading and mathematics to other relevant, commonly used assessments. We've looked at ACT, SAT, ACCUPLACER, which is a placement test. We've looked at WorkKeys, which is a job-related indicator. So we've looked at the content of those assessments.

We've done some statistical linking, which is looking at two sets of assessment results and comparing them. We've been able to complete that for the SAT and NAEP, and we have had an ongoing working relationship with Florida. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

We've also asked people who work in the field of college placement and in job training programs to look at our test and help us locate the score that would represent the knowledge and skills students should have when they enter college or enter a specific job training program. That's called "standard setting." That's how we refer to that. They

make judgments. They make professional judgments based on their experience in training and working in colleges.

We've done a comprehensive, nationally representative, higher-education survey. We sent surveys all across the country to a completely random set of colleges and universities, asking them what tests and cut scores they used for determining whether freshmen students need or do not need to be placed in remedial education. So that will provide a good bit of information.

We've also made an attempt at benchmarking. Now benchmarking is where you identify an important reference group, administer the 12th grade NAEP to them and see how that reference group would do.

As you will see, these results give us reason for optimism. We're optimistic that we will be able to transform the NAEP to help the country track how are we moving in preparedness. So I'm going to spend just a few slides talking about the results we found.

So in terms of the content comparisons to the ACT, the SAT, and ACCUPLACER, we found that there's a good degree of overlap between these assessments and what is on the NAEP test. There are some slight differences, but there is a good degree of overlap. Typically, NAEP is much broader than the SAT or the ACT because NAEP, we didn't get too much into the technical aspects of the design today, but NAEP is what's called a "content sampling model" where no student takes the entire test because it would be way too long. But by testing a broad sample of students, we can measure a broad range of content. So NAEP is generally broader, but it does differ in some ways.

NAEP includes questions that are open-ended, and asks students to write and explain their answers. Most of these other assessments use multiple-choice questions and don't include those open-ended kinds of questions. We've also found that the cognitive rigor of the questions on NAEP is somewhat different, primarily due to these more open-ended questions, which makes it more challenging for students to respond.

We found that the reading texts used in NAEP are much longer and more authentic than you'll find in some of the reading texts used in college admissions and placement tests. And there is also some difference in weighting and coverage of mathematics content, with tests like ACCUPLACER being really focused on college algebra and a test like NAEP being much broader across the mathematics domain.

In terms of WorkKeys, we found that NAEP doesn't really measure workplace-related competencies very well. WorkKeys is an assessment that's focused on workplace-related competencies, including applications and other aspects of work like that. But we do find that NAEP does measure some of the content that's on the WorkKeys. NAEP is just generally broader than WorkKeys, and there is content in WorkKeys that is not measured on NAEP.

So while NAEP does have some items that contain some workplace emphasis, it's not overwhelmingly that, and WorkKeys is definitely workplace focused.

So statistical linking—and don't worry, this isn't Statistics 101 or anything like that—but it requires that we look at what is the relationship between the scores on the reference test and NAEP. So in this case, our statistical linking has been done with the SAT, and you can see if you remember back to your Statistics 101 class, that the correlation for math is higher. The correlation of .91 would be considered a very high correlation between SAT math and NAEP math, and the correlation of .74 between reading is more moderate. So still acceptable for moving forward, but definitely not as high as the correlation for mathematics.

Now here is where the definition of the SAT college readiness benchmark comes in. So that next comment—you see where it says, “Proficient on NAEP is equal to the SAT reading and math college readiness benchmark.” The SAT has set 500 as the level that they call college-ready, and so when we look at the relationship between both reading and math, about 500 on the SAT is equivalent to the Proficient level on NAEP. I'll show you some slides that will make that a little bit clearer.

In our relationship with the state of Florida, using their Longitudinal Data System, we've been able to examine their state data to see how their students who took NAEP in 2009 scored on the ACT. We don't have a national linking study on ACT yet, but we are working on that. And we have found the Florida ACT and the SAT data to be very confirmatory of what we found in the national SAT data. So we are looking for follow-up data from the Florida data system: how did those students actually do in college? Because these were the 2009 seniors. So now we have a cohort of Florida students we are following using this longitudinal data system—we have their 2010 10th-year freshmen results, are analyzing their 2011 sophomore results, and at the end of this year, probably August, we'll have three years of follow-up data. So we'll see some attrition in that database, but we're anxious to look at it.

In terms of the—I mentioned where we pulled together panels of experts to do standard setting in these five job training programs. Now these were selected very specifically because of their wage potential and promise. There are plenty of jobs in these job markets. The wage is a decent wage. It's definitely not minimum wage. And there is a trajectory for higher learning for these occupations. So we looked at these five [NOTE: the job training programs are: automotive master mechanic; computer support specialist; heating, ventilation, and air condition technician; licensed practical nurse; and pharmacy technician], which also have military counterparts. So we wanted to be very careful in what we selected.

We performed 12 studies for these six groups, because college was a group too, and we had—this is a little technical. We had one panel replicate the other to see if we could get the same judgments out of two different groups of trainers. And we learned that the job training studies are somewhat consistent with what we saw for WorkKeys. That is, while

NAEP's current test items are similar in content to college and placement tests, the NAEP content has a much less clear relationship for the job training programs. So we are learning about that as we go forward.

We are following up on that research to look at the actual content that's in these five job training programs, and we think that will be a help. I mentioned already the benchmarking study. We did try to do this in Texas, and if I had time, I could go into that in a little bit more detail. But we will be continuing to look at that, and we will look at the results of the higher education survey, which I don't have to share with you today.

This slide is complex, and I know it'll make you dizzy, even—especially if you haven't had enough coffee this morning. So don't try to understand it. The message of this slide is that the Governing Board is taking all of the pieces of information and trying to see how it fits on this NAEP scale here. So we call this “mutually confirmatory information.” So from these studies, we're looking for one to confirm the other.

I want to show you some of the findings and then I'll turn the podium back over to the governor. In math, I mentioned that the SAT 500 corresponds to Proficient on NAEP.

The Proficient range is this yellow range here [*using pointer on screen*]. So if you wanted to be really precise about this estimate, for 80 percent of the population, you would be right at Proficient. There's another methodology called “concordance,” and that score is about right there for mathematics, so you can see that there.

We've also looked at the Florida data. And I mentioned that we got ACT data from Florida, and so we identified in the Florida sample those students who met the college readiness benchmark and those who did not, both for the ACT and the SAT. And what we found was that the students who met the ACT and the SAT benchmark fell right about there [*pointing*]...and those who did not, fell down in this light blue range. Now NAEP has three cut points—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. So the light blue area is those who fall below *Basic*. So it is beginning to look like we can use NAEP to tell us something about how well-prepared our students are for college, and we can use NAEP then to track across time.

These are reading findings. And what you see is that reading is a little bit more in the Proficient range, very important because most of the reading students do in college is in other courses besides English. For English, it tends to be composition.

The concordance scores are there. Meaning the Florida students who met the benchmarks scored there, and the Florida students who did not meet the benchmark scored about right there. So you can see that some of this data is beginning to look very promising.

Next steps: we're right now having all of this data reviewed by our technical experts who will advise us on the use of these results as validity evidence for potential statements about 12th grade academic preparedness for NAEP reporting.

We're also developing reports documenting our preparedness research. You can look for our reports to come out later this summer. And then we are planning more research for 2013.

So today, I wanted to just leave you with these conclusions that we're making about our research. We believe we've taken a rigorous and comprehensive approach. We've also used methodologically sound procedures, and we've provided documentation for that, more documentation than you would want to read; I promise you. And we have some cautious optimism that we will be able to use NAEP in this way. The NAEP content may not be well-aligned with job training requirements and will require more research.

So with that, Governor, I'll turn it back to you.

Governor Musgrove:

Thank you, Greg and Cornelia, for the presentation, the overview of the academic preparedness initiative and of NAEP. And before we move to the panel, we have a couple minutes for questions. If anyone has any questions of either Greg or Cornelia, we'll be glad to take them, or you might want to just wait and take them as we work with the panel and the legislative group. Any questions that anyone would like to ask now? Yes.

Victor Jones:

Hi. My name is Victor Jones. I'm with the College Board of New York City. And you mentioned that college and career readiness, you don't consider them the same thing. I was wondering what distinction do you make between the two. Is it that the standard for one is not as rigorous as the other, or is it just the mix of skills is different for [inaudible]?

Cornelia Orr:

So far, all we've been able to conclude is that the mix of skills is slightly different, and we got the sense it's different from what's measured on NAEP. And particularly in NAEP mathematics since it's so strongly aligned to the SAT, we think it's probably different than what's measured on the SAT. But remember, the SAT wasn't developed to be a workforce admissions assessment. It was a college admissions assessment.

So it's the mix of skills that are there, and perhaps the rigor, too. We didn't have enough information out of the standard setting, and that's why we've begun looking at the actual content. We did find in our standard setting that job trainers typically hadn't done K-12 education, set objectives. They tend to use structured materials that have already been prepared by instructional designers for job training programs. So they weren't very good at thinking about, "What are the knowledge and skills I want students to have coming into this?"

I wouldn't say that there's no need for higher-level math skills in job training programs,

but I think our research showed that they're different, at least in the current expectations of the job trainers we talked to.

Victor Jones:

Thanks.

Governor Musgrove:

Any other questions for you who are statistical students? Okay. Yes, Jan.

Jan Collins:

Mr. Jones, I'm Jan Collins with the Madison County Business League, and I have three questions for you, or it's a three-part question.

The public/private, are they public/private scores on the math scores that were shown earlier for the state of Mississippi and private school students that are tested? Also, what do you attribute the higher scores in math in the state of Massachusetts to, and the lower scores in math among the minority students in Mississippi?

Cornelia Orr:

I'm going to answer on behalf of Mr. Jones. He didn't hear all of the questions.

Governor Musgrove:

Greg says that's what happens with age. You don't hear.

[Laughter]

Cornelia Orr:

I'll try two parts. So, yes, the national scores include both public and private, but when Mississippi reported separately, it's only Mississippi Public Schools. So when you see data for Mississippi explicitly, it's for the Mississippi Public Schools, even though private schools in your state are assessed and are included in the total national sample.

And for Massachusetts, I'll let Mr. Jones answer the question about lower minority achievement in general. But for Massachusetts I will say, and I'd sort of speak on behalf of the current chairman of our board who is David Driscoll, and he was State Commissioner in Massachusetts when he came on the National Assessment Governing Board. He is unabashed in his claim that they aligned their standards to NAEP. They made their standards and expectations look like NAEP.

Greg Jones:

Yeah. And I think the second part of your question was regarding the general lower achievement of minority students. Of course, obviously, we found that all over the country, and, obviously, a number of issues, whether they're societal issues, whether they're issues of expectations, whether they're a number of issues in terms of teacher preparedness, those sort of things.

Now those are issues that have to be addressed systemically, and continue to be an issue that, obviously, all of us are concerned about. We spent a lot of our time on this issue in California. I was on the State Board of Education, really trying to look at what are the factors that significantly influence that. And, again, I'm sure you've probably done some of the same things here in Mississippi. And it's a very difficult thing to get our arms around. Although, again, I think we are clearly seeing, as you saw in some of the slides, we're seeing improvement in some of those areas.

Achievement gaps are closing, although they're still too wide, and progress is being made certainly here in Mississippi as you saw in those slides, and nationally as well, but still not enough. And so there are a number of issues that all of us are going to have to address and really try to get our arms around of what are the systemic issues that are really creating this achievement gap, and what are the strategies that we need to begin to solve it. A number of things are already happening as evidenced by, I think, some of the improvements that you're seeing.

Governor Musgrove:

Before we go onto the panel right now, and if you have any other questions, just roll those into the panel and we'll make sure we try to answer those as well. Oh, excuse me, did you have a question back there? Okay. And let me try to segue into the next panel. Remember what I said a minute ago about my background? It's interesting that educational expectation is very important. No one in my family had graduated from college. My wife grew up in Mendenhall, Mississippi, considered just a regular normal community. And yet today, she is a White House appointee. She's the director of the Office of Special Education with the U.S. Department of Education, the first Mississippian to ever hold that position.

I have been fortunate, and we have four children, and all four of our children never thought anything other than graduating from college. It's amazing what one generation will do, and all four of them have graduated from college. And it is amazing, our expectation level and expectation in sometimes those intangible things are things that NAEP really does not—correct me if I'm wrong—really does not include in the straight-out testing, but also, obviously, is a big factor.

And today, we have a panel that can look at, and they've heard the discussion, so they might want to mix in some of their comments that they were going to make. But it is an eminently qualified educational leadership panel that we have today, and we've posed to them two issues that we want them to address. One, the relevance and utility to Mississippi of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Initiative, and secondly, what additional research should NAEP be doing to make sure that we can quantify and help use the defining of academic preparedness in a positive real way in terms of helping to improve education in Mississippi, but also across the nation.

And I will now introduce our panel. As I call each person and give some remarks about them, would you just come on up to the platform and take your seat? First is Dr. Tom Burnham, the state superintendent of education in Mississippi. He was appointed first by the state board in November of '09. He officially began his second tenure as the state superintendent in January of 2010. Prior to appointment as state superintendent, Dr. Burnham served as the dean of the School of Education at the University of Mississippi from 2004 to 2009.

Dr. Burnham is a member of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Board of Examiners for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. He also serves on the Educational Testing Service Teacher Licensure Advisory Council, the Education Commission of the States Steering Committee, and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Governing Board.

Dr. Burnham holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, a master's degree in School Administration from Mississippi College, and a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Delta State University.

Dr. Burnham, thank you for being with us this morning.

Our next panelist is Dr. Eric Clark. He began serving as the executive director of the Mississippi Community College Board in January of 2008. He previously served for 12 years as the Mississippi Secretary of State, and 16 years as a member of the Mississippi Legislature. He attended Jones County Junior College and received a bachelor's degree from Millsaps College, a master's degree from the University of Mississippi, and a doctorate in history from Mississippi State University.

Dr. Clark taught history and government at Jones for seven and a half years, and also at Mississippi College for five and a half years. He currently serves on the boards of Jobs for Mississippi Graduates, the State Workforce Investment Board, the Mississippi Technology Alliance, the Mississippi chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

Charles McClelland. Mr. McClelland was elected to serve as chair of the Mississippi Board of Education in 2010. Mr. McClelland graduated from Alcorn State University in

1964, and later earned a master's of Education from Jackson State University. Although he is currently the owner and CEO of McClelland Moving and Storage, most of his career has been in public education. He has worked as a teacher and principal at several schools throughout Mississippi.

From 1981 to 1994, Mr. McClelland worked in the Rankin County School District serving as assistant superintendent and principal of Northwest Rankin Attendance Center. Earlier in his day before he had gray hair, I can tell you from personal experience as a student at South Panola High School, he was the principal and coach at North Panola High School. And while he would concede to let South Panola win occasionally in football, he would never concede to let South Panola win in basketball. And we're still trying to seek that win, so I know him from a completely different world, too. And that world and the world he's in now come together with a high degree of integrity and experience for what he does and brings to the board.

Robin Robinson, is the immediate past president of the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. She was appointed in 2004, by Governor Haley Barbour. She is the director of organization development and corporate communication at Sanderson Farms, Inc., a position she has held since 2000. She has worked for the Laurel-based poultry company in various roles since her graduation from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1978.

Ms. Robinson serves as chair of the MB Swayze Educational Foundation, and serves on the board of directors for the Jones County Junior College Foundation, the United Way of the Pine Belt, and the American Lung Association, Mississippi Chapter. She serves on the University of Southern Mississippi Business Advisory Council, and is a governor-appointed member of the Mississippi Supreme Court Judicial Advisory Study Committee. She also served on the governor's Commission for Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal, after Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast in August 2005.

Ms. Robinson has been named one of Mississippi's 50 leading businesswomen, a "Woman Who Makes a Difference" by the Mississippi YWCA, and one of America's 2000 Notable Women. She was also inducted into the University of Southern Mississippi Alumni Hall of Fame.

Blake Wilson. Blake is president of the Mississippi Economic Council, serving as only the third executive in the state Chamber of Commerce in 50 years. He came to the MEC in 1998 from the Florida Chamber of Commerce where he served as executive vice president, and where he developed the most sophisticated grassroots member legislative action program in the nation. During his tenure, there has been tremendous growth in the membership of the Mississippi Economic Council. There are now more than 8,000 members from 1,200 member firms throughout Mississippi.

Also, under Blake's leadership, MEC has worked with state leaders and other organizations on public policy issues designed to improve Mississippi's economic

competitiveness. MEC has been at the forefront on several major initiatives, including supporting education at all levels—K-12, Community and Junior Colleges, and the Institutions of Higher Learning, and pushing for improvements in the state's workforce development programs.

Now to moderate this outstanding panel today, we have asked Mark Musick to do that honor. Mark, if you will come on up. Mark holds the James H. Quillen Chair of Excellence in Education and Teaching, East Tennessee State University, and is president emeritus of the Southern Regional Education Board, America's first interstate compact for education.

Mark was appointed by three U.S. Secretaries of Education to chair the National Assessment Governing Board. He is a charter member of the new Board of ACT, Inc., serving as lead director of the ACT board and as a member of the ACT executive committee. Mr. Musick was elected in 2006 to the board of directors of the National Center for Improvement of Educational Assessment.

I've known Mark for almost now, what, a couple of decades. Mark brings with him a background of immense respect and integrity for the work he is doing. We could not have found a better person to moderate this outstanding panel of educators and businesspeople this morning. Mark, I'm going to turn it over to you. Please welcome the panel this morning.

[Applause]

Mark Musick:

Thank you, governor. You said a few moments ago that Mississippi was among the first states in 1992, when there was an opportunity for the states to sign up and say, "Here am I. Measure me by NAEP." And I will say to you, while no there was no bloodshed, that was an act of educational courage because the states who signed up in 1992 knew that NAEP was a tough test, a tough measure, and the results were probably not going to be something that you could run up the flagpole and salute, but it was going to be something that gave you important information about where you were.

It was a signal. It was both courage and a signal. It goes back to the organization that I spent a lot of time with, the Southern Regional Education Board, because in 1960, Governor Colgate Darden and a group said that if excellence means anything at all, it's a universal term, and the South must be measured by the same standards used everywhere. That's how we catch up. Some of the governors in 1960 didn't believe that, including the governor of this state at the time. But the other governors said, "No. The way we get to a different place, a better place, is to measure ourselves by national standards, by higher standards."

So Mississippi signing up in 1992, I don't want you to miss or underestimate how

important that was. That was NAEP as an external indicator, Tom, in 1992, and it's an external indicator today. And we're also talking now about maybe a 12th grade, as you heard Greg describe, a 12th grade indicator. Where do you stand on NAEP as an external indicator in 2012 for Mississippi?

Tom Burnham:

Well, Mark, since I was a part of that decision process in 1992, along with Governor Musgrove, who was at that time chairman of the Senate Education Committee, my position has not changed. This state, along with other states, has to be in a position to communicate to parents, to the business community, to the greater populations we serve, a truthful representation of how our students are performing, because only out of that truthful representation will we again have, number one, the credibility we need, and, number two, the foundation on which to build to move forward. So having looked at this now, both internally in '92, and again in the same position, I would tell you it's probably more important today than it was in 1992 because as we look at the current population in the K-12 environment today, particularly in our high schools, the challenge of providing meaningful opportunities for those children has never been greater.

Mark Musick:

Truthful. You've heard what Greg said earlier about NAEP as a truth-teller. It's interesting that you've—and, Tom, correct me if I'm wrong—is I think your chiefs, the colleagues back in 1980 when there was a vote taken on whether this was a good idea whether to have this thinking of, quote, “truthful information.”

Tom Burnham:

Right. That probably would not be the case –

Mark Musick:

Well, it was a one-vote margin. I think it was—the chiefs endorsed it by one vote.

Tom Burnham:

And my good friend and your friend Dick Boyd...

[Crosstalk]

Mark Musick:

Dick Boyd.

Tom Burnham:

—has been a part of that process, and I can tell you Dick Boyd supported it.

Mark Musick:

Anyone else want to comment on this external indicator idea?

Governor Musgrove:

Charles.

Charles McClelland:

I'd like to piggyback on what Dr. Burnham said that, as you know, the state school board is taking the position that they're committed to make sure that, as the presenter said, even though it's one indicator, they'll want to make sure that they follow the progress of our students as it compares to other students in the nation. As we move towards Common Core, I can see here it's going to be more important that we make sure that we follow the paths on that.

Robin Robinson:

And I would like to add something, too. In the reading that was sent to us prior to being here today, it talked about an international way to measure our students and international students. And for my thinking, we're not just talking about the wellbeing of the student or the wellbeing of the community, or the wellbeing of the state of Mississippi. We're talking about the wellbeing of our nation. So this as an indicator that helps determine where we are in our educational system, and preparing young people to be good, productive citizens in our country, and to make a difference. And being on the college board, that's exciting.

Mark Musick:

That's a very good point. This is the National Assessment, but it's about more than just assessment. It's about our national experience. Eric, did I see a comment forming there?

Eric Clark:

I'm a Mississippi history teacher, and I will tell you that oftentimes over the course of our history, we haven't looked hard facts in the face, and we have often tended to take an easy explanation about our problems and not address hard issues that we have to address. But to make real progress, to make life better for our citizens, and, obviously, truth telling is important, and I agree with what these other folks have said.

Mark Musick:

And you're not alone, of course. Mississippi, and Mississippi isn't the only state that has difficulty looking truth in the eye. The comment from Madison, that attention to the achievement gaps is part of this truth-telling because the National Assessment, frankly, before states started doing this, was breaking the information out where you could look at it from economic levels, racial, ethnic, and different backgrounds. So I would say to you one of the important ways to answer that question about the differences in achievement—see what Tom thinks about this—is to follow the questions, and you can follow the NAEP—you can look at the actual questions in mathematics that were given at the eighth grade and the fourth grade, and you can look at the results from each state. You can look at the results by race, ethnicity, income levels, and when you find dramatic and significant differences, then you ask the question, “Why is that?” So I would say I don't think we're making enough use of being able to follow—I mean, I know the overall scores are maybe the most important from the policy level, but there's something important about looking at questions and saying, “Now wait a minute. Why would students in this state be 20 percent more likely to know this than our students?” Tom?

Tom Burnham:

Well, I think that one of the things that we can be very proud of in our state, we have become a state with a series of schools that are data-driven. That didn't happen overnight. That happened between the times that I served in this position the first time, and when I came back into this position two and a half years ago. When I returned to this position two and a half years ago, we clearly were working with school districts on looking at data and making determinations of, what's the data telling us. And the data tells us different things.

When we look at it in the different school districts across the state, it clearly says something to us. But if we want to take the data and look at it as a state, one of the things that the data tells clearly, we have to make a difference earlier in the lives of children in a more meaningful way. And I would be remiss if I did not from this platform say today that we are well past the time when we need significant early childhood programs in this state.

[Applause]

And so that is a part of the analysis of data, the interpretation of data. And if you go back and look at our elementary children and you look at the skills they bring with them when they come into kindergarten, you look at their skills when they first participate in state MCT2, you clearly find a gap that was present when they came into the school environment, and the challenge we have closing that gap as educators. I would tell you our teachers and administrators in this state do an outstanding job on many occasions and in many communities given the starting point where children are at. Is it enough? Clearly, it's not enough. None of us—not one of us on this panel would tell you it's enough. But it

is a part of what you brought forward, Mark, is continuing to look at the data, what does the data tell us.

Mark Musick:

And those fourth grade math results you just referenced—the gap that you have, the gap in other states as well, you need to look at those numbers. You might look at it and say, “Well, that’s only a 30-point gap.” Thirty points is like four touchdowns in the fourth quarter. It is a big gap.

Blake Wilson:

Mark, just, I think, to add onto what Dr. Burnham was saying, it’s interesting in a state such as Mississippi—as you can tell from my accent, I’m not originally from here. My original home is Delaware, and so you’ve got to look for opportunities. And during Governor Musgrove’s administration, there was a great opportunity. There was great interest among Mississippians, of business leaders, community leaders, educational leaders, to do something about teacher pay in Mississippi. Our teacher pay was lagging significantly behind the Southeast. And everybody came together and said, “We’ve got to get this done.”

Well, at the same time, we hooked an accountability bill to that teacher pay bill, and that enabled us to get some of the groundswell going that when Dr. Burnham returned here to Mississippi, we were already moving along in that regard and our school districts were getting their arms around the need to be more data-driven than they had been in the past. And my wife’s a public schoolteacher, and it’s interesting to hear her stories about how—and she’s not at a star school, but they were just a point off of being a star school, and they want to be next year. And my wife is a music teacher. They work together in driving the achievement of that school. Even the music teacher is engaged in remediating with a student: come up with a few musical games that the kid can learn his math problems with, or something in English. Anything they can do to connect and help a student who’s struggling to learn. That’s happening. That didn’t happen before.

A little credit is due to Governor Musgrove for driving that. I remember back in those days, there were a lot of folks that wanted to compromise and we were looking for a way to get the bill passed, as we all do in the lobbying world. And I remember Governor Musgrove sitting there like this, “No, no, no, no, no.” He hung in there and said, “We’ve got to get this done,” and that’s what it takes. The business community that I represent glazes over at stuff like this, okay? This is the process that has to happen in order to get the progress that the business community is interested in.

But when it comes down to knowing what NAEP is, they want to know that there is a national assessment that they can compare. That’s most important to them, particularly multi-state companies. But they would not know the mechanics of NAEP, and they often confuse it with something in Mississippi that we call MAEP, the Mississippi Adequate

Education Program, and, wait a minute, what is this? It's two different things. One is a funding formula, and the other, of course, is an achievement measure.

But the point is that a national score is so critically important to those of us in the business community because it doesn't do us any good in an economic development effort to say, "Oh, well, we're a top-performing school here in Mississippi." People that are coming to this state want to be able to compare to where they're coming from, not just a Mississippi standard, and that's how we get outside the box and be able to sell somebody on this state, how we do relative to—and to assume that we can somehow say, "Oh, well, never mind," it just wouldn't work. So Dr. Burnham was right on in that regard.

Mark Musick:

And, Blake, one of the things Lamar Alexander—who has a long history with the National Assessment—would do when he was governor, would take out newspaper ads, focusing on progress. He would use NAEP in them because he said you can sell a business on where you're going, even if you're not where you want to be, if you can point to your progress—

Blake Wilson:

Well, our Blueprint Mississippi study, which has just been released, huge effort, \$1.3 million spent in private sector funds. And one of the statistics we use is the growth in fourth grade math in NAEP, and over a period 2003 to 2009, that we're number two among the blueprint states. That's our conference, the states we compete with the most, and that's a great example.

Mark Musick:

And speaking of conference, I don't want to get into athletics, but let's take the university and Mississippi State, they're in the Southeast Conference. They're not competing with a bunch of—they're probably the toughest—what they've got is the number one football and number one basketball team in the country, and it's tough being in that conference.

Blake Wilson:

Exactly. You want to rate yourself in your conference first, and then we'd like to then be the national champ eventually, but initially, we've got to win in our conference. And so that's one of the useful things about being able to look at what we call the other blueprint states. And I think I said "math." I meant "reading," in the NAEP score.

Mark Musick:

Let me ask a leading question here. I apologize. All right. We're talking about 12th grade. There is an opportunity for Mississippi to have 12th grade NAEP results. We have 11 states that are now doing that. Next year, there will be 13 or 14, or more. It's information 12th grade NAEP would give you, not on individual students, but on a representative sample of those students who will be leaving high school and entering the community and the technical colleges, those students entering the universities, those persons who might be entering training programs.

So as I say, this is a leading question. Why wouldn't Mississippi want to participate in 12th grade NAEP?

Eric Clark:

Well, let me speak to the importance of being able to judge students that are college ready and all ready for job training, each case. It's terrifically important in community colleges. And let me get into the weeds here just a little bit. I thought Mr. Jones and Ms. Orr did an excellent job talking about the importance of folks being prepared to go do college work or go do job training, and they talked about the high percentage of students nationally and in Mississippi who were not prepared to do that.

Now let me tell you how it works in the community colleges. Most folks that have come to one of our colleges have taken an ACT test, and what's in math or reading or English, that ACT test will be used to assign folks to developmental or remedial classes. That's the entry-level question for traditional students.

Now there can be several reasons why that's not the last word. If folks think that they actually are better prepared than the ACT test indicated, or if they didn't take the ACT or maybe they've been out of school for many years, or maybe they have a GED, we have questions [inaudible]. We have [inaudible] Accuplacer, and about half of our colleges do each of those. Now about 65 kids each year—65 people each year who take one of those tests.

But the point is that we have a huge number of students who do have to take developmental classes in the community colleges. And as Mr. Jones I think said, it's 43 percent of our freshmen in Mississippi community colleges have to take at least one developmental class.

Now let me point out that we have a lot of non-traditional students. Some significant number of those folks graduate 12th grade in the spring and come to us in the fall. But we have a whole lot more folks that may be 20 years out of high school, and we have a whole lot more that never graduated high school that took a GED, because we're open enrollment and they come to us. But in terms of numbers, in the fall of 2010, we had 40,302 students who entered as freshmen in Mississippi Community Colleges, and

17,320 of those had to take at least one developmental class. Again, that's 43 percent.

Now Mr. Jones also talked about budget cuts, and we know all about budget cuts in this state. This is an estimate, but the best estimate that we have is that we spend more than \$25 million a year on developmental classes in the Mississippi community college system. \$25.6 million is our best estimate. And I could promise you we could use that money in a lot of good places besides those developmental classes.

So I often say that if there's one word I'd use to describe Mississippi's community colleges it's "pragmatic." It's like, "Okay. We're at Point A. We're trying to get to Point B. How do we do it the fastest, quickest, cheapest way?" So in order for us to be able to figure out how to get from Point A to Point B, we have to have accurate hard data. We have to ask real live questions and get real live answers to come up with real live solutions.

And so getting back to what Tom said, it is a good thing to stare facts in the face to help us make decisions about how to improve our situation. And in the particular case that I'm talking about there, if we could figure out how to get more of those folks college ready or with job training, it would obviously save them money and time, but also save the state of Mississippi a lot of money.

Charles McClelland:

In closing the gap, from the time I've served on the State Board of Education, and I know a lot of people would say I sound like a broken record, but my pet peeve was that if we are going to measure up, we have to go and identify the problem that's keeping us down there. And to me, that is more economic than anything else. We can't expect a student—and I hate to call out areas, but in a poor economic area, to come up and be the same in one that you would say that a Rankin County or a Madison County.

If we're going to educate our children in some form—and people don't like to talk about this. In some areas, we're going to have to educate the parents as well. And until we come to grips with that, until we can get some help from our legislators with that, it's going to be hard for us to ever close the gap. So I am hoping that in the very near future that we can get everyone that is really concerned about closing the gap to go down in the trenches and identify the problem and deal with the problem.

I don't think we're doing that at the present time. So if we could ever get that focus and commitment, I think you're going to see the gap close.

Mark Musick:

And I guess my question is, would the 12th grade NAEP information for the state help focus that attention or—I know that's not where the problem starts at the 12th grade, but—

Charles McClelland:

But we've got to start there. I mean, you're going to have to start there in order to get to 12th grade, wouldn't you?

Mark Musick:

Robin?

Robin Robinson:

Yes, sir. I would like to add that one of the guiding principles for the college board is to enhance the quality of life by meeting educational needs. And I think the studies will certainly help us do that because at our eight public institutions in Mississippi, we have about 10,500 freshmen coming in to our doors each year. That's a lot of students. About 21 percent of those students take remedial courses—reading, math, writing. So we're looking at 21 percent of that group taking remedial courses.

But the good news is that in Mississippi, of the students who graduate high school, 77.9 percent of them enroll in college, which is in our league, our SREB, they're at like 60-something percent. So we're much better enrolling, but those freshmen who enroll, they are needing the remedial—taking the remedial program.

So I think the study will certainly help. It will help guide us in what areas we need to work on and what we can do to prepare those students to be successful in college, and also to be productive citizens when they get out of college. So certainly, it will help us.

Tom Burnham:

Just over the last two or three years, I have spent a good part of my time taking a look at international education and what's happening in our national education and why we're not achieving some of the successes. And when we talk about NAEP and when we talk about PARCC, and we talk about SMARTER Balanced, three of the major assessments that we look at in this country, it all comes back to the same issue you find when you look at the United States in comparison internationally. We are a system of systems competing against, depending on which country you're talking about, a system.

So we end up being very fragmented. And I want to use that as a springboard to say something that I know the educators in this room are thinking. This is a very important tool. It is a very important measure. It needs to be a priority in what we're doing. But until it has a meaning to a 12th grade student who's sitting down to participate in this assessment, you have neither valid nor reliable results, because they have absolutely no skin in the game. It doesn't determine where they're going to college. It doesn't determine anything at this point.

And so, while this is very clearly a benchmark opportunity for us, one that I totally support and I think the other educators in this room totally support, we need to look hard at what does the system look like. Is this a part of the system? Is it going to mean something to a student that's going to Dr. Clark? Is this going to mean something to a student that's going IHL? If it does mean something, then they're going to be engaged in that process. But that's one of the difficulties that clearly any state that participates in this has, how do you engage the parents so that you engage the child so that the results you're looking at end up being valid and reliable results at the end of the day.

Blake Wilson:

I think one of the advantages that we have in this that we were talking about that statistic about the high percentage going on the advanced learning is that you do have this tremendous network of community in junior colleges, I mean, really, something that was visionary in Mississippi, done many, many years ago at a time when Mississippi was still largely a low-wage, low-skill state. But there was a vision that we needed to have something more, and so they made an investment. The Mississippians made an investment in a community junior college system at a time when it really needed to happen.

One of our challenges now is that we're transitioning more and more away from that low-wage, low-skill economy, almost totally away from it, to now for a middle-skill economy, something that requires folks who can do basic computer work, read, write, do basic math. You can't just come on the line and say, "Well, I'm going to do some low-skill handwork." We're very much in the same position that North Carolina was in probably more like 25 years ago, and North Carolina seized the moment.

They took advantage of that middle-skill economy to build their higher-skill economy. The middle-skill economy became the backbone and framework and the scaffolding upon which to build their higher education and be able to go after the biotechnical field that they have really excelled in. They decided they want to be the South's biotech leader. But they built it with the middle-skill economy 25 years ago. That was the basis for building that framework that enabled them to then build that university system. So the community college and university system have a symbiotic relationship, really. That's what the future, I believe, of Mississippi is going to be. And, of course, we have to continue to provide the kind of support for our K-12 system. That's why the adequate education program is so critical. We've got to get back to refunding that.

The economy's turning around, and so we've got to make that the number one priority while continuing to raise up our university system and our community college system. These are the lynchpins. That's why MEC's number one issue continuously year after year after year is education. There is no other issue when we poll our members. This is it. You might have a worker's comp issue come up on one year, a tort reform issue, or something like that. But when you look across the board, this is where the rubber meets

the road. And so it's up to us to just be demanding customers as business leaders and say, "We've got to make this the priority."

That's the key. An early childhood education is an emerging component of that. We're not going to be able to do it overnight. But this state, when it was flat broke in 1987, came up with a pay-as-you-go program to pave nine miles of highway in every part of the state, every year, over a 20-year period, little bits of investment until eventually that network came together and we're number 16 in the nation, number 5 in our conference among the blueprint states, number on 1 in the Mid-South. Now what if we could do that nine kids at a time, nine classrooms at a time, nine schools at a time, nine school districts at a time, until we move from where we are today, to being number one in the Mid-South? That's what it takes, sustained, long-term commitment. And that's what we've got to do.

Mark Musick:

Here, here. 1982, the Education Reform Act when it drove the stake in the ground on kindergarten, but didn't have the early childhood—didn't pave those nine miles every year after that.

Blake Wilson:

Right. And it was a business community group, the leadership of a Mississippi group that got together with the then-governor and others in the leadership that demanded that. It was some of the people in this room who were instrumental in making that happen.

Mark Musick:

Governor, was there another comment?

Tom Burnham:

Just one comment, Mark, because I want to go back to something I said a moment ago. I think when the decision was made and I was not here at the time, that the state would not participate in this process that's going on now with NAEP, keep in mind the state was coming out of the recovery. The state was trying to move back to putting forth a quality educational opportunity for children, and I would want you and Governor Musgrove and everyone else to understand that I think the commitment is there from the education community to be a part of this. I think the commitment is there from our State Board of Education. I think it's something we certainly will take a look at and move forward in terms of our discussion and in our dialogue about where we go as a state educational [inaudible].

I wouldn't want us to leave here today not communicating that commitment to this effort, because I think that this type of effort coming from the leadership of this country is what

it's going to take to make us internationally competitive. We cannot continue to be a series of fragmented silos across this country. We have to move forward with a unified education system, and so I want to close by saying I applaud the effort.

Mark Musick:

Very good. Very good. Well, 1982, the Education Reform Act, 1992, state NAEP, you were right, were the first to participate. I think was it the [inaudible] settlement in 2002? I believe it was. We've got another year ending in two, so maybe [laughs] that'll be the decision. Governor, I think we have Tom's and then Blake's final comment on the question here. That sounded like the closing of an announcement for political office or something.

[Laughter]

Governor Musgrove:

It did, and I certainly thank him for his nice comments. Someone accused me of paying for the nice comment that he made about me, but—

Blake Wilson:

Oh, you made my life miserable, but we got it done.

[Laughter]

Governor Musgrove:

So let's open it up. Now you've got Mississippi's leadership here in terms of K-12, community college, and university. You've got a business leader, the MEC here. Any questions about how all of this works or something that you feel like they touched on that you have a question about? If you will, we have a couple microphones and have a few minutes for questions. Let's do that. Okay. Identify yourself and then pose a question.

Arthur McLin:

Okay. My name is Arthur McLin from Tougaloo College. I was thinking about additional research to consider, also thinking about early childhood. Now we're talking about career development, career awareness, seems like it should start in early childhood, because I say this for the simple reason of non-interest. I work with a lot of the young people.

Now I asked them one day as far as, "What would you like to be?" One of the students raised their hand and he said, "I want to be a doctor." I said, "Oh, man. That's great. What kind of doctor you want to be? A psychologist, a pediatrician?" He said, "I want to be a doctor. What's the matter? You trying to make fun of me?" It's not that he was

dumb or anything. It's just that no one has taught him about careers, his ability to be able to do something.

Now a lot of our young children, they hate school, and some of them would rather go to jail than go to school. Now we have to look at the environment as far as school. Now we see it as a gap. We have to look at why there is a gap. And I think if we start early with our young children, especially letting them know what kind of career they could have when they do finish high school to go onto college or whatever. They don't know anything other than, "Well, I'm going to have to make it in sports or music." But what about academics? How much do we stress? How much do they know how academics fit into their life as far as what they can be?

Now this goes back to, I guess, when we're talking about educating our students and preparing them for the future, then we have to look at how are we doing it, especially the career thing and as far as trying to fit somewhere where these students can really see that education is a part of it.

Governor Musgrove:

All right. If I take his question or comments on 12th grade preparedness, what does early childhood development have to do with 12th grade preparedness? So that's a tee-up for you all. Let's see what you say to that.

Eric Clark:

Governor, let me make a comment about particularly the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982. I was a freshman member of the Mississippi House of Representatives and the education committee—

Governor Musgrove:

And didn't have near as much gray hair as you have.

Eric Clark:

And didn't have near as much gray hair. But one of the absolute proudest moments of my life was helping Governor Winter pass that bill. Now probably the thing that was hardest about that was, that looking the 1983 election in the face—this was December of 1982—we passed a half-cent sales tax increase as part of that bill which has funded public kindergarten now for 30 years, and there's never been any question that it was funded.

So, obviously, we need early childhood education, but I would state a caution, I would state a warning, and that is the very last thing we need is an empty promise, and what we don't need is a program that's not funded. And now what happens in government is folks will pass a bill and they'll say, "Well, maybe we'll win the lottery and maybe we'll be

able to fund it.” More often than not, we don’t, and so what happens is you have another subpar program that’s then pulling away money from other programs that are already unfunded.

So I would urge everybody as time moves forward and as we talk about the need for early childhood education, let’s talk about the need for funding it because that was one of the great, great strengths of the Kindergarten Act of the Education Reform Act of 1982 is it was funded and there’s never been a question about whether it was funded. It was funded in the Bill.

Governor Musgrove:

Dr. Burnham, would a funded early childhood education program help 12th grade preparedness?

Tom Burnham:

Well, there’s no question, because when you look at the word skills of many of our students entering kindergarten, their ability to work with words, their ability to express themselves verbally, we have a tremendous gap. As we close that gap in early childhood, then you’re going to find students who are going to be successful at elementary school, middle school, high school, and moving into careers.

We’re almost in a position in this state, and not alone, but we’re almost in a position today that we’re starting so far behind, that the goal of catching up by the time people enter the workforce, it becomes an impossible goal. And it’s, as you said, governor, it starts at those early ages.

We know from birth to three are the most critical points in a child’s life. And we don’t even do a good job. We work in the education community, but we don’t do a good job of sharing with prospective parents the importance of birth to three. And I go back to international. You see that when you look at it internationally, people understand the importance. And that’s a part of the education process in this country.

Blake Wilson:

I think, governor, another thing just about early childhood is making sure that we don’t approach it, just because other states have done it one way that we do it exactly that same way. One of the advantages of being late to the table is that we can see those who have done well before us, and those who have not done so well, and craft a program that will work. That’s one of the reasons the business community has gotten behind this Mississippi Building Blocks effort, which is using our existing distribution network.

In other words, if you’re trying to get a product to market, if you’re a manufacturer, you look for a distribution network. So you can go rebuild and build a new distribution

network that's very costly, or you can use an existing distribution network. And what Mississippi Building Blocks does is use our existing distribution network of early learning centers and improve their ability to market our product. And so that is the product, is our children. How do we improve the ability of our children using our existing network?

So it's more affordable. It's a pilot program now. But if that shows the results that we're eager to have, then that may be a model that Mississippi could use that others will look to Mississippi and say, "Here's how a state with more limited resources did not pirate away from our K-12 or our community junior college or our IHL system, and found a way to make it work."

Governor Musgrove:

Robin.

Robin Robinson:

And I just wanted to add, in 1993, Sanderson Farms opened our first childcare facility. In Mississippi, I think we still have the largest childcare facility in the state. And what we have learned since 1993 is that students do better in school when they've had early learning opportunities. It's sad when teachers talk about first graders coming to school and don't know how—they can't hold a pencil correctly. That is so sad. So what we've learned at Sanderson Farms is that early learning makes a difference, not only in their ability to learn, but the ability to be social. They're more social.

So I guess since 1993, we've had a really good program, and we can see the difference in those students who are now graduating high school and who are now going into college. So early learning makes a difference.

Governor Musgrove:

I think we have a question or comment over here.

Preselfannie McDaniels:

Hello. I'm Preselfannie McDaniels, and I work in the English department at Jackson State University, and I also spent a year before I got there as a K-12 reading specialist with the Mississippi Department of Ed. So I wanted to say that so that you'll definitely—know the context under which I'm getting ready to put these two issues out there that I hope we can discuss.

One, from early on, I guess when we've been looking at the research and the numbers and from the conversation from the first panel, I have to say that one thing that troubles me a little bit about our conversation is that I'm always hoping that we're not getting more heavily into talking about job skill preparation versus college preparedness. I hope

there's a balancing of the two.

I understand that college is not systematically for everyone right after high school, but I hope that we're also always informatively giving it as an option that at some point in life, most people will come back to it, even if they don't go to it right after high school. And I may be very biased in that because of what I do. But I think that one issue that we need to discuss first of all is that making sure that everyone who joins this conversation is understanding that there are some serious meeting spaces of employment skills and college-readiness skills. We've talked about writing well, which deals with applications, checks, reports, essays, proposals, letters, et cetera. You need to know how to do those things, whether you're headed for college, or whether you're headed for the workforce.

Computer skills overlap in that space, too. I think we need to talk about that, or communication skills, analytical reasoning, whichever course you take, whether it's logic or analyzing literature, problem solving, and also computational skills.

And then I want to put the last thing out there. I'm not sure that most people are aware that at one point, the Institutions of Higher Learning for the state of Mississippi brought together what was called the College Readiness Taskforce, which lasted for about a year, or a year and a half. And I did work with that group of people. It was in reading and also in math, or I better say English and also in math, because students at that time were not doing very well as freshmen college students, and now we're talking about those who were not necessarily in developmental courses, but coming into regular courses who were also failing English and math in huge percentages.

And one thing that came out of that taskforce, it may seem very, very simple, but that what needed to be addressed was that there should be a focus on the gap between what middle school and high school teachers believe and college professors believe about what students preparedness really is, that there we didn't have the same ideas about what those students should know when they came into college classrooms. Middle school and high school teachers had a list of what they thought students should know, and then college professors saw something which was very different from what they should know.

Governor Musgrove:

I think if you hear what has just been said, it echoes what I said to start with that there's no common understanding of what academic preparedness happens to be, whether you're talking about from a K-12 point of view, or a community or junior college and university point of view, or the workforce. Now given the statements that she has just made, Dr. Burnham, do you—or any one of you may want to take a shot at the importance of those things and how do they relate to what we're talking about today, if at all.

Tom Burnham:

I think that if we step back and we take a realistic look at today's workforce—the requirements of today's workforce, and the admission to community colleges and universities, there's just not a great deal of difference. The knowledge base is pretty much the same. You may be talking about a different skill set, but the ability of a person to be successful in today's workforce and the ability of a person to do community college and senior college work rests in a well-developed knowledge base, an extensive knowledge base. And I don't think you can have one without the other. I don't think that we're saying that a child can go this way or a child can go that way, because for a child to go either way, that knowledge base is going to have to be extensive, and it's going to have to be well developed.

Eric Clark:

Well, in the community colleges, we have in the course of a calendar year, about 115,000 students who will come to take credit work on one of our campuses. About three-fourths of that is academic track that would lead to an Associate of Arts degree and then lead onto a university, and about one-fourth is career tech track which may lead to an Associate of Applied Science degree, but it's primarily job skill related. But Tom is absolutely right. Even the folks who take the career tech classes, it's very high tech. Folks have to know how to use computers. They have to know how to do higher math. They certainly have to know how to be able to read and write effectively.

In addition to that, we'll have non-credit classes. On average, about 90,000-plus people a year take workforce training which is not for credits. It's very specific job skill related to teach people to do a specific job at a specific industry, and it's geared to the needs of that business. But in terms of any kind of credit class, whether it's academic track or whether it's career tech, it is absolutely not for dummies, and it's not for folks that don't want to put in the work and learn the skills.

Blake Wilson:

The CEO of Ingalls Ship Building down on the coast, which has a strong relationship with Gulf Coast Community College and training for their workforce, that workforce training today is not like the workforce training from a few years ago where we were really training people to do basically handwork. They didn't need a strong public education background. But today, and he points out, and if you were to look up "ship builder" in the dictionary, I think you would see Irwin Edenson's picture there. He is a tough, hard-nosed, ship builder, fighting for more opportunities for building ships here in Mississippi. It's the state's largest private sector employer. And he says early childhood is where it's at.

He went around the state with us and talked about the importance of early childhood because he says, "I can teach somebody how to weld. I can teach somebody how to join. I

can teach somebody through the community college system to be a good electrician. But I cannot teach them to read, write, do basic math, and communicate. That's why the early education going into K-12 is so important."

That's where it's at. And so as we—and he—point out, if we build that middle-skill economy that we're just talking about here, that will attract more engineers, more process managers, more people with the need for higher-education skills. So if you build that middle-skill economy, that will create the higher-ed economy as well, the higher-skilled economy. So that's really a base upon which to build it.

Governor Musgrove:

Let me close out this panel segment by saying this. I think that what we have heard this morning is that our approach relates to making sure that, in Mississippi, we have academically prepared 12th graders, so that we can move forward.

As we take a break, we're going to take about a ten-minute break, and I want you to make sure that as we look at our third panel, which would be legislators, we want to look at the pending legislation, what's being done at the Capitol, and what, if any, connection do any of those pieces of legislation happen to have with a better academically prepared 12th grader as they're moving forward.

And I believe that would be a very good discussion. I will moderate that discussion in a few minutes. I'm looking forward to that. So let's take a ten-minute break, but let's thank the panel this morning.

[Applause]

Thank you all very much.

[Symposium resumes after break]

Governor Musgrove:

Our last panel this morning will be by three distinguished legislators. I'm not sure how to introduce them first. I think I'll introduce them by age, maybe as much as anything else. I will moderate the panel. We want to talk to the legislators because they're the policymakers. They will be one of the groups that will take the information when NAEP gets through with the research, to analyze it, to look at it, to determine in which direction should Mississippi go. And I believe that's very important. We also have a number of pieces of legislation under consideration that may or may not advance 12th grade preparedness. We want to hear their comments about that as well.

So as I introduce each one, would you come up and take a seat on the stage and let me

say a little bit about you.

First is the Honorable Hob Bryan. He has served in the State Senate since 1984. He represents Itawamba, Lee, and Monroe counties. Senator Bryan is chair of the Judiciary, Division B Committee, and vice chair of the Public Health and Welfare Committee. He also sits on the following committees: Compilation, Revision, and Publication; Congressional Redistricting; Constitution; Elections; Finance; Highways and Transportation; Legislative Reapportionment; and Local and Private.

He's an attorney and he was educated at Mississippi State University, and law school at the University of Virginia. Senator Bryan.

Senator Bryan:

If you could ask them to hold _____.

Governor Musgrove:

I did that early on. That's what they've done.

The second person is Honorable Kelvin Buck. Has served as a state representative in the Mississippi legislature since 2004, for Benton and Marshall counties. Representative Buck is vice chair of the Insurance Committee, and sits on the Universities and Colleges committee. He was born in Tupelo, is a former city alderman of Holly Springs. He is a director with ABC 24 News in Memphis. He was educated at Rust College, and is affiliated with the NAACP, and the Boy Scouts of America. Senator Buck, good to have you with us this morning.

And the third panelist this morning is the Honorable Gray Tollison, who has served as state senator in the Mississippi legislature since 1996, representing Lafayette, Tallahatchie, and Yalobusha counties. He is chairman of the Education Committee in the state senate, and has been a member of the committee for 16 years. Senator Tollison previously served as chairman of the Judiciary Division B Committee and the Constitution Committee.

Gray Tollison is a partner in the Tollison Law Firm, and serves as the attorney for the Lafayette County School Board. Gray is a graduate of Rhodes College and the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Now will you all give them a hand?

[Applause]

[Background talk]

You all were not here earlier this morning when the education leaders were talking about 12th grade preparedness, the effect that it would have on K-12 education and in university and community college. This symposium is being hosted by NAEP. How important do you all think or believe it is as legislators to have an education system that's accountable, that would make sure that we understand what is happening when a person graduates from high school?

Kelvin Buck:

Well, since I was previously here for some of the discussion earlier from some of the educational leaders, I'd like to take a stab at that. I think many of the points that they brought up were right on target. Understanding exactly how well or where our students ranked, not only as it relates to in the state, but across the nation and internationally is important.

I always like to ask the question is an A student in Mississippi the same or equivalent in terms of preparation as an A student in China or an A student in Japan, or is an A student in Holly Springs the same as an A student in DeSoto County? I think the NAEP can kind of help us answer those kinds of questions as to the preparedness level of these students and if that comparison and that preparedness level is the same regardless of where you are and what high school you go to in the state.

A 12th grader preparing to go to college or preparing to go into the job force, we need to know exactly where we are in the state so that we can perhaps come up with policies legislatively that will help us get to the goals that we're trying to achieve. And, quite frankly, we've come up with several kinds of legislative initiatives, the Education Achievement Council, the Graduation Taskforce. I even think that the Children First Act is an attempt to address some of these challenges we have with our graduates at the 12th grade level.

Governor Musgrove:

Senator Bryan, how does NAEP measure up as a benchmark for students across the country and across Mississippi?

Senator Bryan:

Well, I would say—and I apologize if all of this is trite because everybody's light years ahead of me on this, but the basic problem that all of us face is it's very difficult to measure how much an individual has learned. There's a problem with every measurement. I remember the basketball coach says, "Well, I'll tell you what. You take your team and you learn to shoot free throws and you've learned to shoot set shots, and we'll have a test about who can shoot the best free throws and who can shoot the best set shots and your team will win."

You can go out there and play a basketball game and my team will win because we've been learning which are more difficult to measure than the percentage of shots. Not that the percentage of shots you make isn't important, but there's more to it than that. So I have a great deal of sympathy with anybody trying to figure out how to measure education. But at the same time, although that's difficult, it's absolutely essential because all of us want to know how we're doing.

The problems with measurements are when they don't test everybody and the scales change. I always get frustrated about hearing reports about how well we're doing based on ACT scores without taking into account the percentage of students that are taking the ACT. One way to improve your test scores on the ACT or SAT is to reduce the number of students that are taking it so the tests are only taken by the best students.

But because NAEP is given consistently and because it's given, at least in theory to a randomly selected group and because, at least in theory, the scores are comparable, NAEP comes the closest as anything to being a tool that we can actually use to see, are we learning—are students learning more now than they were learning ten years ago, and how well are students in Mississippi learning compared to the rest of the nation? That information is essential and I don't think there's anything else out there that comes close to NAEP to being able to answer those questions.

I also realize that people who make tests theoretically say they're for this purpose or this purpose or this purpose or this purpose, and you can't use Test A for Purpose B, and it's all over my head. But it would seem to me, at least superficially, that it would be very useful to give the NAEP test to more students so that you could make comparisons from school to school. I don't know if there's some hesitancy to tie the score to individual student or the individual school, but it seems to me it's a very useful tool and it would be more useful if it was used more extensively than it is.

Governor Musgrove:

Senator Tollison, you've been on the education committee since 1996. You've represented school teachers, so you have a lot of familiarity. I'm going to say it's a given that we all want students to know as much as possible when they graduate from high school, that we want the dropout rate to be as low as possible, that we want all of them to be able to be prepared to go to college or either to go into the workforce. In general, as chairman of the education committee, how do we make that happen? What can we do or what are the best indicators of things policymakers like yourself can do to, hopefully, help make that happen?

Senator Tollison:

Well, I mean, like he said, there's a lot of issues, and the dropout rate, you're not having students that even receive a high school diploma, and then you get to the issue we're talking about today when they receive a high school diploma, what does that mean? How

do you measure if they're proficient or not? Being from a university town I'm familiar with the remediation that goes into some of the students that attend the University of Mississippi, and it's a lot, a lot of time and a lot of money go into remediation.

And I saw one of your statistics that show the high number in our community colleges as well. I think you would say the same thing about job skills training that to a certain extent, they're doing things that should have been done in high school, the same thing with the remediation. So it's a lot of money and time, and that's not a good measure. Unfortunately, that's one measure we have—is the anecdotal evidence about the need for remediation in our two- to four-year colleges.

So the idea of having some type of, I guess it's almost like an exit exam, is kind of standardized. I know we've tried that with the subject area testing, and that works to a certain extent on the state level, but if you had a measure that went across the board—and that's the thing about NAEP. Over the years, they tell it like it is, and, unfortunately, the statistics for Mississippi are not as good as we'd like them to be, but I think it's important we be told the truth in terms of where we rank among—against other states. I think this would be helpful in that regard as well.

Governor Musgrove:

Well, one of the things that NAEP is doing under the 12th Grade Preparedness Initiative is conducting a number of research studies that will hopefully give us information about what it takes to be prepared academically in the 12th grade. And we will present that information to policymakers, to education leaders, et cetera. But is there a silver bullet? Is there anything that we can do if we all want that to happen? Policy-wise, what do we need to do to make sure that our young people are more prepared and more of our young people graduate from high school?

Representative Buck:

That's the golden question, I think. I think when we think about the people in this room, and we think about NAEP, and we think about all the research that is being done and the information that we can have at our disposal, the question becomes once we have that information, as policymakers especially, what are we prepared to do with the information? And it's clear that there's good data coming out now from NAEP, and what they have in terms of giving us a picture to work with.

But then the question becomes like anything else that we come up with, whether it be a taskforce or any kind of study, can we—do we have the will or do we have the means to take the steps policy-wise to make a difference and do something about it, because at the end of the day, the purposes of all this information that NAEP will provide, will be to give us an idea of a map as to how we can improve and how we can move from 50th in so many categories relating to education, to a much more respectable position among our other states.

And so I'm always concerned about the fact that I look in these rooms and I see all of these educational leaders. I sit and I listen to the educational leaders all basically saying the same thing. We need to have good data, and we need to look at this and then be able to do something with it. Well, most of you are going to come up to the Capitol after the data has been put out there, and say, "Well, here's what we suggest. Here's what we recommend based on the information. Mr. Legislator, what are you going to do about it? And here's what we suggest, or do you have the funds?"

And I'll put one other thing in there. Education policy—I heard one of your other panelists talk about—it cannot be driven by the snapshot economic situation of the day. It's a long-term policy. So whatever you come out with, certainly is not going to be a snapshot, knee-jerk approach. It's going to be a long-term approach that's going to require, whether the economy is up or down, is going to require a significant commitment, not more unfunded mandates or good speech material, but real solid commitment to whatever the funding requirements may be, or the policy changes may be. And so with that said, even things like tax policy can affect what we might do with the NAEP information.

I just think that's important, what we do with it once you guys have given it to us. You've given us quite a bit, to be honest with you.

Governor Musgrove:

Well, there are a number of pieces of legislation. I know that, Senator Tollison, you've handled and passed through the Senate, Senator Bryan, that people have looked at. Are any of those pieces of legislation specifically addressing any of the issues of 12th grade preparedness, or could they possibly?

Senator Tollison:

I think it's the early college, high school. The Mississippi Works is trying to capture kids who are about to drop out, have dropped out, or are at risk of dropping out, and helping them complete their high school coursework or move them into a career-ready position, or education path. That would probably be helpful in that regard because we're trying to graduate students, and at least make sure they complete the high school diploma and move into either getting a skills certificate or an Associate's Degree, possibly.

So I think that would be helpful, and to make sure they meet the benchmarks that would be proposed, yes. But I go back to the two- and four-year colleges. We need to know, and I think the colleges and community colleges would want to know, are they college ready as well. I think it would be helpful to them as they prepare to meet the incoming students in [inaudible].

Governor Musgrove:

Well, according to the statistics we saw this morning, I think in Mississippi community colleges, we have about 43 percent of our students taking remediation courses, and in our universities, was it about 21 percent? I think something along that line. But isn't that a loss of money? Isn't that excess spending by the state that maybe could be funneled towards something else if we could reduce those numbers?

Senator Tollison:

Yes. And I've seen the numbers: \$20 million or \$30 million on remediation, and I don't know—I can't remember where that came from but, yes. And that's the whole point. It's you're redoing something that was supposed to be done in the K-12 level, and that's why I think this would be helpful in educating the public about this issue. Just because somebody has a high school diploma in certain respects, doesn't necessarily mean they're ready for college or career ready. And we need to have that measure to show the diploma does mean something. And it does in most of our schools, but there may be some schools where you get a diploma that it may not, whether it's the case of social promotion, or whatever.

Governor Musgrove:

Senator Bryan, there's probably not anyone in the legislature that's been around education policy more than you have and that is fairly opinionated about it, which I kind of like, to be quite honest with you. But you have seen this data, and you know where we stand. Are there policy decisions that we could make that would have a pretty good indication that we could move Mississippi in the right direction, again, the right direction being defined as better prepared high school seniors, and more high school seniors as they move forward?

Senator Bryan:

Well, several years ago, I was sitting in the education committee and for some reason, Senator Jordan referred to me as Brother Bryan, which caused a bit of laughter in the committee room. I said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing. If I were to take up preaching, I think I'd have to do it as a Methodist rather than a Baptist, because I think my chances of getting sent somewhere are a lot greater than my chances of getting called somewhere."

[Laughter]

I don't know how you make it as a preacher when they can meet you and you're [inaudible]. But if I were a preacher, I think I would preach every single Sunday on love God and love your fellow man. Under the theory, once we got that straight, we could figure out the other stuff. But let's stick with the basics. And I remember John Curley, who was a school superintendent in Aberdeen when I was first elected, he was my

constituent. Shortly after I got elected, he moved to another Senate district. I don't know that there was a causal factor, but he got [inaudible].

But John Curley was a great school superintendent, and discussing education once he said, "People say throwing money at education won't work. How do we know? We've never tried that. We tried everything else. Why don't we try that a while and see how it works?"

Well, I don't know that money will guarantee good education. I do know that shortage of money will just about guarantee that you don't have good education. And to a large extent, it's the basics. You've got to have good teachers. If you're going to get good teachers, you've got to pay them. There's competition for bright people nowadays. And if you're not paying something that at least lets people who want to teach, teach and earn money, they're going to do something else. So you've got to do that.

The school districts need enough money to operate on, and they need some sort of stable funding so they can focus their attention on educating the children instead of worrying about what the budget's going to be from month to month. I think we thought we had that fixed when we passed the adequate education formula. It was unthinkable that the formula would not be funded, and it no longer got on the books. Then there's been excuse after excuse not to fund the formula, which has been draining.

If you look at communities, schools, of course, reflect what's going on in communities. If you look at the amount of money we pay for education in this country compared to other countries, superficially it seems like we may be paying a lot of money, but then when you look at the social programs that other countries have involving health care and involving a social safety net, whatever you want to call it, a lot of those things help ensure that students come to school ready to learn.

So I think a lot of this really is the basics. However boring it may be, unless you've got good teachers, unless they're paid well, and unless the schools at least have enough money to operate on, the people running the schools will be so busy just trying to get a credit to teachers in the classroom and keep the doors open that that's where all their time is focused.

So I would say, to begin with, you've got to have that foundation before you can begin to make comparisons. Then the next thing that takes place, which is something that Representative Buck said when we first started, how do you compare an A in Holly Springs to an A in DeSoto County? I know that Mark Musick has this fantasy that we ought to be able to agree on what should be covered in Algebra 1, that that really ought not vary that much as you go from place to place and district to district. And he's devoted a lot of time to try to get some sort of consensus about what do you teach, and could the states all agree on that. And apparently, not so, which *[laughs]* it doesn't bode well for decisions about history courses.

But one of the great difficulties you have—and I don't know how you ever figure it out—is to figure out what are they teaching that they're calling Algebra 1, let alone what are they teaching that they're calling English Lit in the various classrooms around the state? That's a great struggle, and I don't know how you get there. But I do know that measurement is critical to getting answers to those questions, and I do know if you don't have the resources it doesn't make any difference how much information you have, if you don't have the resources to do something about it.

I don't know that that's responsive.

Governor Musgrove:

Senator Tollison, you've heard Senator Bryan's philosophical position there. Is he wrong? Is he right? Is he partially—or how do we deal with the factors that are before the legislature now and the desires?

Senator Tollison:

Well, let's see. I graduated from Oxford High School 30 years ago. And let's say—

Governor Musgrove:

Are you that old? You dye your hair?

Senator Tollison:

That's right; 1982. And I want to see Mississippi move up and not only in our country, but the world. Right now, if you were watching the Masters, Exxon had their promotion showing the United States is 25th. I mean, you've got Estonia and Korea, all these countries academically have moved ahead. And the irony is, people in the United States think we're number one still in math they say, but really we're low. And I'm going back to this, the importance of having benchmark measures and data is telling the truth, getting the truth out there so we can address the issue.

I think everybody knows it takes a community invested in education to have a good school. It takes quality leadership in the classroom, also in the principal's office. Unfortunately, we don't have those quality teachers. We have right now 400 or 500 Teach for America students from all over the country helping us teach our kids because we have a shortage of teachers. You can have all the money in the world, but—that would help, yes, because you might get more people. But it would take a generation to get those people interested—instead of getting interested in law and medicine and business and insurance. They've maybe turned that around. Pay them \$50,000–\$60,000 a year starting. That's sure in a perfect world.

And that's another thing. In a perfect world, you have a perfect school district, they're

going to be doing all the right things, but that's not necessarily the case in certain situations. And I think, again, going back, the Council on Foreign Relations released a report about two weeks ago. We are in a crisis, in a national security crisis because the children who have graduated from our high schools across the country are not qualified to be in the military. A certain percentage. I can't remember if it's 70 percent. We've got to re-double our efforts. I mean, we've been a nation at risk for 30 years, I think in 1982 when that came out, and we're still here. We haven't had that disruptive movement to say, "Hey, this is serious. We need to do it." And I think there are places where we are having that, but in Mississippi, when we are consistently ranked at the bottom, I think we need to be even more disruptive. Because the status quo is not working.

Thirty years ago, we were there and I hope not 30 years from now when I'm 77, we're in the same place. I want us to move up and we have to think differently how we educate our kids. I think it's going to make a difference.

Governor Musgrove:

Representative Buck, I don't know whether Mark Musick said it today or whether I'd heard him say it before, but Governor Hunt from North Carolina, and North Carolina basically said you have to have a systematic, continual effort over time to move those numbers. Now you two senators had obligations over at the Capitol and got here a little before our panel started, but Representative Buck was here. Blake Wilson said a couple of completely unsolicited—I did not pay him any money to say at some—and the audience think I did, but I did not.

But Ray, would you put up one of the slides that he talked about? Do you remember what Blake talked about? He said that when Governor Musgrove was in office, that there was a focus toward education, and we moved. Look at these NAEP numbers, and they're two things that I think that are important. Look at the timeframe where you see the jump, and not only do you see the greatest jump in the history of our test taking for NAEP, but also in closing the gap.

We didn't have just one segment that did well. We had everyone who improved to close the gap. And you see that timeframe. Well, I unabashedly am proud of that, by the way. But my question is, if we did some things right then, how do we continue that momentum? How do we do what Governor Hunt is talking about in North Carolina over the extended period of time, Representative Buck?

Representative Buck:

Well, I think one of the big keys to it is that anytime you base your economic policy and education policy on these snapshots of an economy that may be down and you begin to determine what resources you'll put into an education based on that alone, as opposed to trying to find more innovative ways to try to make sure you maintain, because, for instance, what good does it to say that our goal is to pay teachers and have [inaudible]

that this is the way the teachers are going to be paid based on an average, just because the economy goes down for two or three years, we hold off on any kind of a pay increase for teachers for five years, or whatever policy decision we make in terms of investing.

In other words, the long-term education policy should always be visionary and look beyond just these immediate statistics relating to the economy alone. And so I just think that commitment is so important. And I also would like to add one other little quick tidbit. When you guys give us information—NAEP—truthful, straight-up data that is unbiased, un-political in nature. It has nothing to do with party, anything like that. It's just solid information. We have to be able to, again, take that information, put all the other things that might be political in nature aside, because the children that we are talking about here don't really care what party is involved with this thing. They don't care about any of that other political stuff that goes on.

Our will should be based on what will give us the best outcome for these young people. And I think that when we come up with policies—and I've mentioned this—that might distract from that because we don't really want to face the real data that you give us, so we come up with ideas like maybe a charter school for everybody or something along that line, I think we run into a situation where we're looking for things to be a solution opposite of what the data is telling us.

You have data that says this is what could help us, and we looked over here in another direction and think that we can solve the problem using some other method, when we haven't even, as the senator indicated, funded education. We've never thrown money at education in Mississippi. We've tried to just get by. After all, the Mississippi Adequate Education Plan is just that, adequate. It's not a superior funding level. It's an adequate and in my version, that's a C. That's the way I look at it.

Senator Bryan:

We should have had a fancier name, shouldn't we?

[Laughter]

Governor Musgrove:

Yes, we should have.

Senator Bryan:

Let's just say "adequate" and "equity" are terms of art and school [inaudible]. But I would say that I think I'm on pretty good terms with former Governor Barbour. I worked with him and people on his staff on a lot of issues, and we were on the same side of a lot of them, so I'm not here to try to criticize Governor Barbour, except that, I guess I am. For the past eight years, there just has not been the focus on education that there has

been. When Governor Barbour took office, fairly quickly, he attacked the Adequate Education formula as being an artificial formula. And I still remember seeing on his website the notion that money is tight and we're just asking the schools to do without their five percent for one year. I don't know to this day what five percent referred to.

There have been constant battles, not over whether we were going to fund education to the level that the law required, but how short of that we were going to be. As you may know, school districts have reserve funds for a lot of good reasons, just like one hopes there's a little bit of cash in all of our bank accounts. But Governor Barbour first started targeting the money that the various school districts in the state were holding in their reserve accounts. And I think it's like \$80 million, whatever it is, with the implication being that the various school districts should just all spend the money in their reserve accounts before they expected from the state, or alternatively, the state can cut funding and make the school spend down the reserves.

Well, of course, one of the reasons they have the reserves is for the defensive mechanism against inadequate funding at the state level. But when Governor Bryant took office, one of the first things he did was propose a budget which, although we were historically low in the cuts to education, proposed another cut to public education and was going to require, once again, the old song about the school districts using their reserve funds. Fortunately, after that budget came out, there were some Democrats in the legislature who said that we didn't think that was a good idea, and the Republican leadership in the legislature proposed a budget that basically funds education at least at the same level it was last year. But nevertheless, that's the first proposal that Governor Bryant made.

This sort of thing takes a toll on the average district, and it doesn't matter how much information you have, and how much you know what you ought to be doing if you spent nine years having to defend the fact that you've got a few dollars in your bank account so that you could make payroll for cash flow purposes, and having to worry literally from month to month if what sort of mid-year cut you're going to get to inadequate funding that you were told you were going to get.

It's just about been a lost decade when you put it all together, for public education. I hope that we could turn that around. I'm not blind to the economic situation, but it goes back to the basics, and if you don't have good teachers and if you don't pay them well, you're not going to get people coming in to the system to be there to teach, and we don't need—we're going to need good teachers to get by. I know we're going to have to have [inaudible]

Governor Musgrove:

Before I ask my last question, I want you to get ready if you have any questions at all, and we'll make sure we conclude about on time. Senator Tollison, I'll give you this last one.

As chairman of the education committee, first of all how do you go about setting the priorities that you have to set in looking at education policy? And I'm going to use an example here that could be a trick question, but I'm going to take the trick out of it.

A lot of times we ask the question, "Which is more important, reducing the dropout rate, or making sure that our students are more prepared academically to graduate?" Can you say either one of them is more important than the other, or do you have to try to address those kinds of issues all together?

Senator Tollison:

I think you work on those issues all together. That's all you can do. And I think that's the same thing with the education policy. You have a big gap right there, and are we working on reducing that gap? Are we working on increasing the top gap? Because if you show another slide, Mississippi will be the bottom, and the rest of the United States will be above that. Those are two different issues we're dealing with.

In my school, in Oxford, a great school, a high-performing school district, we're the second highest in the gap between black and white and proficiency. You're teaching two different groups of people. It's not a one-size-fits-all, because, basically, I'm certainly not an educator. I do know a little bit about it. You teach to the middle. You're not teaching those kids who are keeping the test scores up or the kids who are keeping the test scores down. You're teaching to the middle. So there are issues we have to deal with to help those who need help to achieve proficiency to get to grade level.

But at the same time, we have an obligation to those kids at the top who can excel even more. I mean, just today, two kids that went to Stanford signed—or were bought out for a billion dollars in a company that didn't exist I think a year ago. Went to Stanford University. That's what's happening in California in Silicon Valley. I mean, there's a lot going on with our economy, and it's almost like we have two economies right now. David Brooks wrote about it in today's *New York Times*.

We've got to think big. And it goes back, yes, we have to close that gap that you've put up here, but we need to close that other gap, too. And it's not one-size-fits-all on closing those gaps. And, yes, we need to reduce the dropout rate. Thirty-nine percent is not acceptable. But at the same time, as we're talking about today, we need to make sure when a young person in Mississippi receives a high school diploma, it means something.

Governor Musgrove:

So it's the challenge that you have to constantly deal with all the time.

Senator Tollison:

That's right. Exactly.

Governor Musgrove:

Well, let's open up for questions. I could talk on with a lot of questions, but I want to make sure that you all get yours answered.

Ramona Williams:

Governor, we certainly thank you for thinking of—

Governor Musgrove:

Identify yourself, and then—

Ramona Williams:

I am Ramona Williams, the executive director of Jobs for Mississippi Graduates. We are a school-to-work program that is in 43 high schools across the state, and we certainly thank you, governor, for bringing this particular forum to our state, to our panel, which is our legislators, as it related to funding of programs that work. Our program, Jobs for Mississippi Graduates, has been around for 20 years. We have a 93 percent success rate of graduating students from high school, and these students are what's called our high-risk, at-risk students. Meaning that they have various barriers to them graduating from high school, be it excessive absenteeism, they've been in trouble with the law, teachers, teen parents, the whole gamut of economic poverty-level students.

My question to you as our leaders, as our policymakers, what emphasis is there on making certain that programs that work are actually funded in our state? We can have assessments by NAEP and a number of other entities, but until we're willing to make a commitment and make substantive changes as it relates to our education of our youth, we can assess from now till, and it will not matter.

So my question to you, what is your importance as it relates to funding programs across the state that actually work in educating our youth?

Representative Buck:

I'll respond to some degree to that. I think that programs with data that shows that there is some success, high levels of success, are the kinds of programs like any other that, for instance, early childhood education, there's all kinds of data out there that says the importance and what kind of an impact it has on educational achievement. So we know that we have data that tells us exactly what works, what are the best practices. Then that's the kind of initiative we ought be behind with not only our legislative policy in terms of enabling language, but with our dollars, our funding.

If we know it works, and it makes a difference in the direction that we want to go, like this intervention with young people who are—on the other hand, if they don't receive this kind of education, it will cost on the other side of this coin in terms of some of the other things that they will have to omit, the things that we'll have to do to kind of to keep them in society some kind of way, one way or the other. That is the other challenge. So there are consequences to not doing what the data tells us. And I think what Mississippi's experiencing is when we hear the data, we just close our eyes, and we say, "Well, the economy is bad," or we say, "We don't have it."

Well, at one point or another, you pay for it. And not funding a program like this has consequences. That's what you have to be able to identify. What are the consequences for not doing what makes sense?

Governor Musgrove:

Okay.

Ramona Williams:

Senator Tollison, as the chairman of our education committee, as it relates to various programs that actually work, what is your position?

Senator Tollison:

Well, I'd look at the data and make a determination with priorities, so that's basically it. And sometimes we're limited in the data we have, and that you do the best you can in making the decisions without that.

Governor Musgrove:

Here, this person, and then Dr. Phillips. Yeah. Let's let the—mom always said let the lady go first, Dr. Phillips.

[Laughter]

Rachel Canter:

Hi. My name is Rachel Canter. I'm executive director of Mississippi First. I wanted to ask a question about accountability, because it's generally true that people care about what they're held accountable for. And currently, under our state accountability system, even though we talk a lot about graduation rates, we talk a lot of dropout rates, most of our schools are not actually held accountable for their dropout or their graduation rates.

Under our state system, having a high graduation rate, or having a high high school completion rate can make a difference between being a successful or high-performing, or

a high performing school and a star school. But schools and districts with low graduation rates and high dropout rates are not actually penalized for them at the lower end of the accountability spectrum.

Additionally, we don't hold schools accountable for how prepared their graduates are when they reach higher education. There is nowhere in our accountability system where we either track or hold schools and districts accountable for whether or not kids who receive a diploma from high school actually can go on to two- and four-year colleges without the need for remediation.

And since we care about what we are held accountable for, you could make an argument that our system does not actually hold anybody accountable for whether or not K-12 is producing kids out of high school who are prepared for two- and four-year colleges.

So as leaders in our Mississippi legislature, what do you think the appropriate role is for our state accountability system in making sure that kids are better prepared when they get high school diplomas from the state of Mississippi? And then for those kids who aren't actually achieving those diplomas, should we be holding our schools and districts accountable for that?

Senator Bryan:

I'm not sure exactly how to react to the notion that we not holding districts accountable. We have test scores which are published. Every school—every district in the state has the results of how well students were doing in those districts made public. The schools are ranked according to how well they're doing. There may be some issues about the ranking system, but one of the theories is it's the people—and this is a constant issue.

Historically, schools are controlled by the communities where they were located. And actually when we passed legislation that ultimately allowed for the state to take over failing schools, that was a major change in the way school districts had operated, I guess, since the Northwest Ordinance. If you want to go back that far.

So if a school district fails and the test scores are low enough and on and on, the state of Mississippi can and does go in and take over the school district, remove the school board, remove the superintendent, and try to get a new team in to do better in that district.

It is also our thought that if citizens in a community are provided with accurate information about how well those students are doing, how well the schools are doing, or how poorly they're doing—it's an opportunity for the community itself to become aware and work on those things through the school, and the school board.

Governor Musgrove:

You all basically agree with Senator Bryan on that?

Senator Tollison:

Well, I do think that we need to be a little more transparent in the information out there. I have to go to a national site to get information. It's not—I don't know. It's a lot of different issues. You really dig down in the details. And this goes back to what we're talking about today. We need the facts and to get all the information out.

I mean, there's a difference in terms of how you determine whether somebody is a dropout or not, or whether somebody is a graduate or not between the state and federal government. So you've got all these competing definitions. It would be nice to have a standard across the board so we're comparing apples to apples, not only within the state, but across the country.

Governor Musgrove:

At least indirectly, I heard the legislator saying that one of the challenges we talked about early this morning was that there is no common understanding of academic preparedness, and it seems that they're making the case that they're better off as decision makers by having things like that information.

Senator Tollison:

Well, and I'll give an example. In our charter school debate, we had a couple school districts that were termed successful. In the common vernacular, "successful" means "successful," but the schools in that school district were not successful, and it was difficult to explain it. I think I finally understood after, as I said, digging into the details, getting in the weeds. They don't take into consideration, just like Rachel said, the graduation rate. If they had, then they probably wouldn't have been a successful school district, and that's determined by the commission on accreditation.

Those are just issues that when you tell a policymaker that it's a successful district, you would assume that those schools in that school district are successful as well. That's when you get into the issues about having information the people understand.

Senator Bryan:

But since we're talking about dropouts, I'd just like to go on record as saying I don't believe any of the data about dropouts. I agree there's a problem. I agree we haven't been focused on it, and I agree we need to focus more attention on it. But when I see percentages of dropouts, I don't believe the data, because there's so many things going on. Students moving in, students moving out, and whatever method you have of determining how many students drop out, I think has inherent problems.

What I think would be very useful, and I keep trying to get some education people to do

this—so if any of you know any education folks—I wish—maybe somebody's done this. I wish someone would literally take some school districts, a representative group, and look at the individuals who enter kindergarten or first grade or wherever and follow those specific individuals for 12 years to find out what happens to those specific individuals. And then you would have information about if they dropped out, why they dropped out. Did they move to another community? When they moved to another community, was there a problem in going from school to school? Was it a situation in their home? Did they just lose interest?

I don't know. But I think—and now that I said this, probably there's 16 studies that somebody's going to show me on the Internet, but it can be done. There are communities that are small enough, and you can get to areas small enough literally to follow the human beings. And I think a study like that, that went on for 20 years would do a lot of good to providing actual data about why people drop out more so than the data that I see.

Representative Buck:

Real quick. The accountability question that you raised, and then you suggest maybe a penalty of some kind for whatever lack of performance that might be determined. You have to really be very careful about that because systemically, there might be penalties or some issues that are causing this lack of performance. And until you correct those issues in these districts, from districts who didn't, you may not be looking at the same thing when you talk about a graduation rate in Holly Springs and a graduation rate in Madison County. There may be some systemic issues related to funding or what have you that are causing it. Not making excuses.

I think we certainly have some accountability with—the Children's First Act has brought us some accountability. But when you talk about penalizing, you penalize after you have a level playing field and everybody's playing from the same level playing field. Then you can maybe have some accountability standards and some consequences, if you will, for not performing, or incentives to make you perform better. I'd like to go from that standpoint.

Governor Musgrove:

Dr. Phillips, we'll make this last question here so that we can—

Ivory Phillips:

Thank you, sir. I'm Ivory Phillips and I'm a member of the Jackson Public School Board of Trustees, and I [inaudible] Jackson State [inaudible] 40-some years, so I know a little bit about education and I just wanted to comment and then ask a question.

Governor Musgrove:

Don't make it too long now on the comment.

Ivory Phillips:

All right.

One of the things I've been concerned about for a long time, back in 1972, I kind of advocated the idea that [inaudible] school at least 11 months out of the year. We don't need the agricultural kind of school year that we're still running on. Secondly, we call teachers professionals, but we don't pay them as we pay doctors, engineers, professionals. Thirdly, as Kelvin Buck pointed out, we talked about an Adequate Education Program, but then we funded less and then, which means obviously it's inadequate.

So my question, because what I thought that you gentlemen were going to talk about is what kind of legislation is now in the House and Senate that's likely to pass, that will deal with these issues that your organization has uncovered that would help us to be successful as a state as far as education is concerned at every level? What is there now that is likely to pass that's going to make a difference and that will be funded?

Governor Musgrove:

Gray, you want to take a shot?

Senator Tollison:

I think that's the wrong way to look at it. I think it starts with the community. You need to get the City of Jackson behind the public schools. Right now the City of Jackson has got to go to a hearing April 26 about accreditation. They got to get their house in order, first of all. I mean, what's more important is having the community involvement. We went to Rowan Middle School, the lieutenant governor and I, to talk with the principal over there, Jason Sargent, because they're interested in those kids getting a good education.

And what's the elementary school beside it?

[Crosstalk]

Yeah. And we want to make sure they're educated as well as any kid in Madison County, Southern County, Harrison County. But I think it starts with the community. The community has got to get involved and say, "We demand accountability. We want better results for our kids in Jackson."

One piece of legislation is not going to be the fix-it-all solution. There are things that can be done, but it starts with the community, and on a smaller level. And that community around that middle school, Rowan Middle School, it gets the parents that say, “I care about education. I want to know what’s going on in the schools.” Go into the schools. See what’s happening in the school. That makes a difference.

That’s where it starts, first of all. But, certainly, at the Capitol, we can do some things, but ultimately, you look at the schools across this state, and they’ve got a community that’s invested and they are concerned. I mean, in Oxford, we passed a \$30 million bond issue to build a new high school because people up there care about public education. I’m fortunate to be there where I was able—I mean, the university environment. It makes a difference.

But I’ll tell you another place, though, that you wouldn’t suspect. Kosciusko, Mississippi. Kosciusko has a good public school system. They’re a high-performing, or a star—I can’t remember—because that community is behind that school. And their demographics are half and half, 48 and 48. Oxford is 50/47 in terms of demographics. But it takes a community to make a difference, and looking to the Capitol is not going to be the answer.

We can help, but we need the community to be involved.

Representative Buck:

Well, I want to respond. I think it’s a very good question, and over the years, the State of Mississippi has attempted to come up with legislation. We just talked about the ’82 Reform Act. I remember legislation dealing with the Mississippi Best, certainly the Mississippi Adequate Education, and more recently the Children’s First Act. All of these different legislative initiatives have been designed to deal with the issue of performance of our schools. Apparently, especially with this debate about charter schools, the idea might be to have the people in Jackson do less and take away some of the laws that we had on the books that might be preventing local districts from doing.

In other words, I advocated a year or two ago that we look at the books and see what we ought to take off the books and allow districts to have because we honestly saw that as a way of giving school districts the ability to be more productive, by giving certain districts a little more autonomy to do some of the things that they want to do and come up with some initiatives locally that the Senator is talking about.

So maybe the idea is not more laws, but look at the laws we have, and if they’re impeding education, take them off the books and see if that would help, or give some latitude to the local districts to do something other than the bureaucratic stuff that’s going on. But still, it goes back to the data that maybe NAEP and some of these other organizations are putting out there. Are we prepared to deal with it once we get the data?

Governor Musgrove:

Senator Bryan, I'll give you the last word here.

Senator Bryan:

Thank you all for coming.

[Laughter]

Be sure and visit Hal and Mal's if you're looking for a place to eat. You can go down to the Mayflower. I have lots of travel information.

Governor Musgrove:

Let me conclude with this. First of all, let's say thank you to the panel for being here with us today.

[Applause]

Secondly, as educators, a lot of times, you don't like to hear people talk solely in terms of "education equals jobs." I think that this three-legislator panel would probably tell you that the creation of jobs happens to be a high priority in almost any and everything. And while they don't necessarily equal each other in terms of gaining legislative support, many times, if you connect the two together, it actually does matter in terms of support. And, ultimately, that's what we want.

I remember Dr. Sutton taught me this. He was the president of Mississippi Valley for a good number of years, and he said any number of years that a student goes to college is beneficial for that person, even if they don't graduate, because they end up being more knowledgeable and more productive in society. And sometimes I know we do take education for the sake of education, but also, we do look at education to help a person be more beneficial and productive in society.

So as NAEP continues to do its research, as it continues to make its report to policymakers, educators, and others across the country, then it'll be up to them to debate and discuss. But what we want to make sure is that we produce the most accurate, most transparent data and information to be able to make those decisions on.

Finally, in closing, I would just say once again, thank you very much for being here today.

[End of Audio]